



A RECORD OF A MORTAL'S JOURNEY TO IMMORTALITY

BOOK 04

Wang Yu

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A Record of a Mortal's Journey to Immortality

(凡人修仙传)

by

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(忘语)

Synopsis

A poor and ordinary boy from a village joins a minor sect in Jiang Hu and becomes an Unofficial Disciple by chance.

How will Han Li, a commoner by birth, establish a foothold for himself in his sect?

With his mediocre aptitude, how will he successfully traverse the path of cultivation and become an immortal?

This is a story of an ordinary mortal who, against all odds, clashes with devilish demons and the ancient celestials in order to find his own path to immortality.

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Chapter 301: Poison Expulsion And Breaking Incantations

“Don’t say anything more, I’ve already decided!” the tall and thin Second Brother cried out in a resolute voice.

The young woman grew anxious and hastily turned her head toward the old man and the youth in a request for help.

After the two looked at each other, the youth remained silent. The old man sighed, saying, “Fifth sister, let Second Brother go! He is repenting for the previous matter! Only like this will he be able to feel more at ease!”

“However, Second Brother...” The woman still wanted to dispute it further but the Second Brother had already walked in front of Han Li said in a tranquil tone:

“Senior, please start! Use me as a test.”

These words were tragically moving. However, what happened next caused the four to feel dumbstruck as if cold water was being poured over their heads.

“Are you four misunderstanding something? When did I agree to remove the blood curse?”

Han Li said this with an icy bone chilling tone, causing the Five

Friends of Meng Mountain to look at each other in dismay.

“If Senior didn’t intend to remove the blood curse, then why did you study the curse on Eldest Brother’s body!” Their second brother hastily asked after snapping out of his shock.

“Did I say that I would remove your blood curse after researching it? I was only curious!” Han Li expressionlessly said.

Seeing Han Li’s ice-cold appearance and hearing his ruthless words, this group was stunned!

“But doesn’t Senior wish to know about those people’s affairs? If you do not remove the blood curse, how can we reply to Senior’s questions?” the youth added with a bit of a stutter and a face filled with anxiousness. He absolutely did not wish to see this opportunity escape from his very eyes.

After Han Li heard this, he gave him a slanted glance and then coldly laughed several times, wordlessly turning his head to the sky.

Being asked such an obvious question, Han Li felt it beneath him to answer.

“Fourth Brother, there is no need to ask. This Senior feels the information he can acquire from us is not worth exchanging for our lives. Thus, he is unwilling to act so easily!” The dark-faced old man proved his status as an elder with experience that was

incomparable to the youth's and dove straight to the core of the matter.

“What conditions does Senior want before he will take action? We only want the blood curse to be removed, so please list your demands. We definitely won't object.” Soon after, the old man calmly continued.

“Good! Since you've said these words, there is no need to speak in circles.”

Han Li suddenly applauded with a slight laugh and then wore a beaming smile.

From the four's gazes, they increasingly felt that Han Li was quite temperamental, causing the four to unconsciously feel more fearful towards him.

“My conditions are very simple! If you want to free yourselves from your ailment, not only will you have to tell me everything you know, you will also have to obey my commands for the time being and help me respond to this group's attacks. I reckon that they won't let me off so easily and will want to dispose of us all in the near future.”

“However, you don't need to worry about being heavily outnumbered. I am a cultivator from Yellow Maple Valley; I only came to Yuejing to handle sect matters. So long as you help me for this period of time, I will be able to request reinforcements. At that time, you won't need to be afraid of these scoundrels.”

Han Li listed his conditions in an amiable manner and hoisted the banner of his sect with no trace of politeness. With just this, he caused them to become steadfast.

“Senior is a cultivator from Yellow Maple Valley!”

Although the old man had long guessed that Han Li was probably a cultivator from the seven sects, hearing him acknowledge this from his own mouth caused his face to reveal a smile.

“Alright. In accordance with what Senior has said, we cannot stay uninvolved. After all, once our blood curse is removed, we will certainly become a target of their pursuit. We will be a bit safer by Senior’s side!” the dark-faced old man answered very frankly.

When the youth and woman heard the old man’s words, they smiled without refusing! Clearly they agreed with the old man’s actions.

The seven sects were much more powerful than the ones who had placed the blood curse restrictions. Naturally, they could be relied on.

That thin and tall Second Brother had a face of hesitation, however. He seemed to want to say something but hesitated once more.

“If Senior is truly capable of removing our blood curse, we still

have another request. I hope Senior will agree.” After the dark-faced old man looked at the Second Brother, he suddenly raised this request with a respectful tone.

Han Li had been expecting this, so he indifferently said, “What is it? So long as it isn’t too troublesome, I will do my utmost to fulfill it.”

At this moment, Han Li seemed exceptionally easy to deal with from his words.

“This one’s Third Sister was left behind in a house in Yuejing. Now that we’ve been captured by Senior, we don’t know whether something happened to her. We hope Senior will go and save her when the time comes,” the old man said with a solemn appearance.

“Eldest Brother!”

When the tall and thin Second Brother heard these words, his face held a grateful expression.

“Fine. Since you all are following me for the time being, I will naturally save your companion. But I must urgently remove the severe poison that is within your bodies! Else, in less than an hour, your lives will be forfeit and there will be no curse left to break!”

After Han Li agreed, he changed the topic and said something that caused the four to become scared witless.

“What severe poison? We should only have the blood curse on our bodies!” The youth’s expression greatly changed as he asked this with panic and doubt.

When Han Li saw the youth doubt his words, he didn’t get angry. Instead he explained this with a stiff face, “When I examined the blood curse, I discovered that in addition to the blood curse, your Eldest Brother is harboring a severe poison. Not only is this poison’s extremely toxic, but it’s also very unstable. I reckon it will break out rather quickly. Fortunately, this one has quite of bit of experience in the Dao of detoxification and will only take slight effort in removing it. You don’t need to worry much about it. Naturally, if you don’t believe me, you only have to wait an hour more and see whether there truly is poison in your bodies!”

After Han Li said this, the four were convinced for the most part.

“So it was like that. That must be why the person who gives us our commands suddenly appeared and told us to drink a cup of wine with him. It turned out the wine was laced with poison. We believed that since we already had the blood curse on our bodies, they wouldn’t further act against us. Who would have thought their methods are truly so cruel!” The Second Brother’s expression became extremely unsightly as he said this.

As the youth and the young woman came to a sudden realization, the old man’s face darkened. It seemed he had thought of this matter earlier.

Since Han Li had already decided to rope in the Five Friends of Meng Mountain to become his assistants, he naturally did not

delay and have their poison flare out. He immediately took out a white and an azure porcelain bottle from his storage pouch and tossed them to the dark-faced old man.

“The medicine pills in each of the bottles can disperse a majority of the poison. The rest of the poison can be destroyed if you slowly circulate your Qi,” Han Li said very simply. The dark-faced old man immediately acted in accordance to his words and split the medicine pills with the other three. Then, without the slightest hesitation, he took the initiative to bite down on the medicine pills.

It seemed the old man clearly understood that if Han Li truly wanted to act against him, he simply wouldn't trick them with an antidote. Knowing this, he swallowed it without worry.

Not long after they all took Han Li's medicine pills, the group felt an intense stomach ache.

After the young woman's face became red, she suddenly stamped her foot and flew to a small hill, barely able to fly on her magic tool. However, she was still within Han Li's control as her flying speed was truly not fast.

When the other three saw this, they all awkwardly went to find a concealed location, their bodies wanting badly to excrete the poison from their bodies.

After a moment, the trio's faces returned to Han Li's side with embarrassed expressions.

That woman also returned with a trace of crimson still remaining on her face.

“Alright. Now I will start to remove the blood curse! Whose first?” Han Li didn’t delay and directly said this.

“Naturally, it’d be...”

Just as the Second Brother was about to say something, an incomparably shriveled hand pulled on his arm!

“Second Brother, you still have Third Sister! Since my old and weary body has no method to enter Foundation Establishment and I won’t live for much longer, I should go first. After all, Third Sister has a small child in her belly and needs someone to help her look after the child!” the dark-faced old man said serenely.

“Eldest Brother! This won’t do! How could I let...”

The tall and thin second elder brother appeared emotionally moved and shook his head as if he were beating a drum with it, wanting to disagree.

When the youth and the young woman saw this, they wanted to open their mouths and request that they first braved the danger!

“Don’t argue. I’ll have your Eldest Brother be first. After all, I

tested his body just a moment ago, so I'll have a slightly higher chance with him!"

Although the four had displayed a touching scene with their affections as sworn siblings, this was of no concern to Han Li, and he was disinclined from taking this to heart. As of now, he was impatiently wondering whether or not he could break the blood curse. If he couldn't, everything he had just done would have been a waste and he would have to create another plan.

Once Han Li said this, the four didn't have anything to further argue over. The old man walked over to Han Li with a solemn expression.

After the other three exchanged a mutual glance, they could only look on at the old man with a worried gaze.

Peng... Peng... A series of six or seven sounds rang out.

Han Li waved his hand, and several human-sized puppet soldiers wielding weapons appeared by Han Li's side in a flash of white light.

"As I am breaking the blood curse, I won't be able to meet an attack. These puppets are only a precaution. They will take the initiative to attack anyone who approaches within thirty meters of me! You had best go a bit farther away!" Without the slightest trace of politeness, Han Li indicated that he held absolutely no trust in them, causing the three to helplessly fall back.

Chapter 302: Countermeasures

In the evening, Qin Yan was repeatedly pacing back and forth in the Qin Residence's guest hall; his face was somewhat anxious.

Earlier that day, the servant who was assigned to bring Han Li a meal reported that he wasn't present. It seemed Han Li hadn't returned during the night.

This caused this rarely worried person to become worried, not out of concern for Han Li's safety but rather because his bodyguard suddenly disappeared without saying anything. How would his Qin Clan respond to any harm done by the Devil Dao?

"Qin Ping, please go and see whether Young Master Han has returned. Once there's any news, please immediately come and tell me!" Qin Yan commanded somewhat anxiously.

"Yes, Lord." Qin Ping responded with secret delight. Then, he ran out of the hall in an instant.

From his perspective, it seemed Qin Yan had become increasingly concerned for Young Master Han, further proving that he hadn't chosen incorrectly. It seemed that his position was soon about to rise in the Qin Residence.

"But Lord, youths occasionally going out is a very ordinary matter. There is no need to be so worried or anxious!" Within the hall, although Qin Yan's most favored Third Wife said a few exonerating words about Han Li, her voice contained an obviously

sour tone.

This was no surprise. Ever since Han Li had arrived at the Qin Residence, Qin Yan had always kept Han Li close at his side. The Qin Clan young masters and madams who were originally doted on were no longer supported. The Third Wife's children were also among them; she couldn't help but feel greatly jealous.

“Humph. Woman, what do you know?” Naturally, Qin Yan heard the meaning in his third wife's words. However, he was worrying about the life and death of his own clan while this woman was occupied with this small matter of jealousy. After he glared at her, he didn't pay any further attention to her.

Qin Yan's attitude naturally caused the Third Wife to feel wronged, but she knew that what her lord husband hated the most was a woman's shrew bickering. She could only resist her urge to vent her complaints with difficulty. She said nothing further, worried she would become even more resentful toward Han Li.

But not long after, Qin Ping suddenly ran back with a delighted expression. Furthermore, once he entered, he loudly yelled, “Lord, Young Master Han has returned. Furthermore, he has brought back a few guests. Young Master Han hopes Lord will be able to arrange them a residence near his own.”

When Qin Yan heard this, his heart had finally relaxed. So long as this great Immortal didn't suddenly disappear without word, even if he brought back ten, several tens, or even a hundred friends back, he wouldn't have any complaints.

“Since it’s Honorable Nephew Han’s request, have them stay at the Clear Sound Courtyard. Also, do not neglect Han Li’s guests,” Qin Yan said without taking the time to think. This caused his third wife’s complexion to become increasingly unsightly.

“Yes, this one will carry this out!” Qin Ping energetically ran out again with a completely enthusiastic appearance.

“Lord, this is somewhat improper! Our Qin Residence is a great clan. To have these strangers suddenly come in, isn’t it a bit too imprudent?” The third wife couldn’t help but carefully mention this.

Her words weren’t aimed at Han Li at all. Rather, she was currently feeling uneasy.

When Qin Yan heard this, he was slightly surprised, but after a moment of hesitation, he waved his hand and said, “This is of no importance. Friends of Honorable Nephew Han will not prove to be any problem.”

Upon hearing Qin Yan speak such favorable words toward Han Li, the third wife was left speechless.

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At this moment, Han Li was sitting in a chair at his residence. Five people were sitting in front of him, the Five Friends of Meng

Mountain.

The youth in their ranks was currently talking nonstop about something. Occasionally, the others would add in a few comments. Han Li, on the other hand, revealed a somewhat thoughtful expression.

In the wilderness outside of Yuejing, Han Li was actually capable of using his formidable spiritual sense to erasing the blood curse previously placed on the four. Soon after, he brought these people to infiltrate where a single middle-aged woman was staying.

Surprisingly, this matter was carried out without the slightest difficulty.

Although the smoothness of the operation was unexpected, Han Li still broke her blood curse and brought them all back to the Qin Residence.

In truth, having these people find a different residence was acceptable, but Han Li didn't fully trust them.

If they weren't under his watchful eye, he didn't dare to guarantee that these Five Friends of Meng Mountains would truly and sincerely fight this great enemy alongside him, even with the favor of breaking their curse.

People's hearts were truly hard to fathom!

Although they may be grateful to him today and were willing to risk their lives for him, tomorrow they might feel like their lives were worth more, becoming despicable and ungrateful. This was truly baffling to Han Li!

Furthermore, he didn't share a part of their sworn brotherhood. It was quite likely that they would value their own lives more!

Naturally, if he were to make use of his own restrictions and poison, he would have absolute control over them. But if he did so, in their eyes he would be no different from their previous slave masters. Over a long period of time, he would be certain to suffer repercussions.

If he left them with a vile impression, Han Li wouldn't be able to use them any further. Deep in his heart, Han Li had some other ideas in plan.

If the Seven Sects were truly able to withstand the invasion of the Devil Dao, he would be able to resume his previous life of cultivation and have these people help him with pill recipes and medicinal ingredients. As such, he wouldn't need to toil away, needlessly travelling to fetch materials. He could instead use that time for bitter cultivation; his pace of cultivation was certain to greatly increase this way.

Furthermore, while the cultivation of these Five Friends of Meng Mountain wasn't too weak, it wasn't very large either; they were the ideal choice. Thus, Han Li didn't use such shameful methods in order to control them by force.

However, Han Li also knew from experience that unless there were enough benefits, low-level cultivators wouldn't continuously perform errands. Furthermore, he was unsure of their temperament, so he would have to spend more time with them in order to be sure. He would come to a decision once all of this had been concluded.

"... We are truly ashamed! Until now, apart from recognizing a few cultivators that had also been seized, we haven't seen the true appearance of the two who gave us our orders! We truly don't know much about them!" After the youth said all of this, he bitterly smiled.

"It's nothing. I already know that the other party is from an evil school called the Black Fiend School. Furthermore, the primary reason why they abduct others is to cultivate evil techniques. That alone is enough." After Han Li heard this, he indifferently smiled.

"Senior Han! How about we stay here and wait for reinforcements before acting?" The recently-rescued middle-aged woman suddenly asked a probing question.

When the other four heard this, they also looked at Han Li with concerned expressions, wanting to see how Han Li would answer.

When Han Li heard this, he coldly smiled in his heart. It seemed these people were quite eager to halt any interactions with the Black Fiend School. However, how could there be any reinforcements from the Seven Sects! The entirety of the Seven

Sects was currently in a war with the Devil Dao. Any forces stationed back at the sects were truly lacking. If he were to go and make a report, he was certain that no one would come.

But fortunately, on his return a moment ago, he had sent a request to Li Huayuan for help through some Yellow Maple Valley contacts within Yuejing.

The Seven Sects wouldn't be bothered by this matter, but it was impossible for his master to not care and not ask. In order to fulfill Li Huayuan's task, Han Li had provoked such a great problem. Furthermore, he had no choice but to remain! Else, with such difficulty, why wouldn't he run? If he could, he would have already made his escape!

But in the end, Han Li truly did not know how many reinforcements would come. He reckoned he would be given a few Senior Martial Brothers.

With this thought, Han Li answered with a relaxed expression, "Naturally, this is out of the question. At the very least, we should clearly scout the other party's stronghold and their major figures before reinforcements arrive. This way, we will be able to capture them in a net. To vainly wait at the Qin Residence is far too passive, since doing so will only give them time to track us down, leaving us at a disadvantage. We absolutely cannot allow them to so calmly put everything into order!"

Hearing Han Li's words, the Five Friends of Meng Mountain looked at each other in dismay. The dark-faced old man stoked his beard and said with a deep voice, "Senior does make sense.

However, with the mere clues we have on hand, we will be unable to grab onto their tail! The stronghold we originally stayed at is certain to have been abandoned. We have nowhere to start!”

The Second Brother silently nodded his head and expressed agreement.

“Be at ease. From your description of those two Black Fiend School followers, I’ve already discovered their identities. So long as they are captured alive, it’s likely we’ll eventually understand the circumstances of the Black Fiend School.”

Han Li seemed to have already predicted this as he calmly replied.

These words startled the five at first, but soon after, they revealed pleasant surprise. They felt that Han Li had become even more profoundly mysterious!

“Good! Since Senior Han already has a plan, we will listen to Senior’s commands.” The dark-faced old man pledged resolutely.

When Han Li heard this, he nodded his head with satisfaction.

“We will move tonight. Only by quickly taking action will the enemy be caught off guard.” Han Li narrowed his eyes and coldly said this.

“Tonight?” The Five Friends of Meng Mountain couldn’t help

but reveal amazement.

Chapter 303: Astonishment

Although the Five Friends of Meng Mountain were greatly surprised by Han Li's decision, they felt that his words were reasonable, and so they didn't oppose him.

However, when the middle-aged woman asked Han Li about the true identity of the two from the Black Fiend School, she was met with a tactful refusal from Han Li. Han Li only faintly smiled and said everyone would naturally come to know this once they made their move.

This caused the middle-aged woman to cease further pursuing the matter and reveal an appearance of indifference.

Not long after, Qin Ping passed on Qin Yan's commands and arranged a nearby courtyard for the Five Friends of Meng Mountain.

As Han Li saw them move farther away, an odd expression flashed in his eyes, and he suddenly muttered something to himself that no one else could clearly hear.

At night, after everyone ate dinner, the Five Friends of Meng Mountain gathered together in the guest hall of the Clear Sound Courtyard. They were preparing to move late at night as Han Li had instructed.

"This is baffling! I can't seem to remember!" The fourth brother, a thirty year-old youth, incessantly racked his brains around with

a confused appearance.

“Fourth Brother! You still don’t remember?”

The youngest of them, the fifth sister, asked this with a mysterious smile as she lazily sat in her chair.

“Fourth Brother, you’ve always said that Senior Han appeared familiar and that you had seen his face somewhere. However, you haven’t been able to remember when or where. This doesn’t sound very convincing to your youngster sister. Did you want to have a favorable relationship with Senior Han so badly that this mistook his identity?!”

It was clear that this young woman’s words were filled with ridicule.

“En, that’s very possible. After all, this Senior’s appearance is quite common, so it’s normal for Fourth Brother to be familiar with him!” The second brother teased as he tasted some tea.

However, his eyes didn’t leave the middle-aged woman at his side for a moment. He was continuously looking at her still attractive appearance and continued to glance at her belly with a sense of happiness.

However, this third sister, the middle-aged woman, saw the fourth’s brother distraught appearance and couldn’t help but make a scornful face with all her strength, causing him to laugh

uncontrollably; his normally shrewd and profoundly strong appearance was nowhere to be found at the moment.

“Humph! You’re all talking drivel. I’m certain I’ve seen him before, but it doesn’t seem to have been recent. It should’ve been quite a few years back, else I wouldn’t have forgotten about it,” the youth said with unwillingness as he unhappily glared at the young woman and the tall, thin man.

“A few years back? Fourth Brother, several years ago we were bitterly cultivating and didn’t leave seclusion. How could you have seen Senior Han? Could it be that you saw him when you were still wearing diapers?” The middle-aged woman chuckled as she made fun of the youth.

“Third Sister, you...” The youth cried out angrily to the middle-aged woman with an embarrassed expression.

“Several years ago, Fourth Brother hadn’t always been in secluded cultivation. Could it be you’ve forgotten? Before we met Fifth Sister, we participated in the Immortal Ascension Assembly. After the two to three month journey, we unfortunately returned with failed ambitions, but luckily, we didn’t receive any serious injuries!” The dark-faced old man indifferently interrupted with these words.

“What! Everyone participated in the Immortal Ascension Assembly!?” The fifth sister blinked several times and revealed a very curious expression. On the other hand, her Second Brother and the middle-aged woman looked at each other with bitter smiles.

“There is nothing to say. That was the first time we truly knew the meaning of ‘viewing the sky from the bottom of the well’!” The middle-aged woman sighed.

“What? Fourth Brother, at that time you said to me.... Yi!”

The young woman turned her head with great curiosity to see what her second brother was going to say about the Immortal Ascension Assembly, but she saw that he had a face filled with shock.

“Fourth Brother, what’s going on?”

The others also saw that the youth’s expression was rather queer, so they asked this with astonishment.

“Second Brother, do you remember that day at the Immortal Ascension Assembly when Eldest Brother and Third Sister separated from us? I was feeling gluttonous at the time and privately went to a restaurant at Jia Yuan City to sneak in a meal.” The youth didn’t answer the other party’s suspicions and suddenly mentioned an old affair from the time. This caused the tall, thin man to feel indescribably strange.

“Of course I remember. At that time, although I concealed this matter for you, Eldest Brother still found out and fiercely rebuked you!” The second brother answered with slight confusion.

“That’s right. At the time, didn’t I see a young cultivator there who I suspected wanted to participate in the Immortal Ascension Assembly? His cultivation was only of the seventh or eighth layer, so we felt that he was overestimating himself,” the youth added with a bitter smile.

“It was too long ago. I don’t remember it very clearly. Why are you talking about this?!” the second brother asked, hesitant.

He truly did not know why his fourth brother was suddenly talking about this matter.

The others also heard their puzzling words and felt greatly baffled.

“The young cultivator I saw that year is precisely the current Senior Han!” the youth said with a dry voice, causing all those present to become dumbstruck.

“What? Senior Han was the young lowly cultivator?” The thin, tall man jumped up from his chair with an unconvinced expression.

“What’s this all about? Speak clearly!” After recovering from astonishment, the dark-faced old man wrinkled his brow and asked this.

“It’s like this, Eldest Brother!” The thin, tall man hastily gave a general description of what happened that year. When the others

heard this, they felt it was inconceivable.

“Fourth Brother, are you saying Senior Han was that seventh layer Qi Condensation cultivator from back then?” The young woman gulped her saliva as she said this. Soon after, she realized her bearing was graceless and couldn’t help but blush.

As the others were shocked, none of them paid attention to this minor action of hers.

“Is Fourth Brother mistaken? After all, that matter occurred over ten years ago, and Senior Han’s appearance shouldn’t completely match his age.”

“No, that person was certainly Senior Han! His appearance is exactly the same at that time. Apart from his age, his appearance is completely similar.” The youth was shocked at first, but after some thoughts, he became more certain.

Hearing this youth’s decisive and resolute words, the others looked at each other in dismay.

In a brief ten years, this person with such low cultivation was actually able to become a Foundation Establishment cultivator. These people couldn’t help but feel pain in their heart from this fact.

For a brief moment, nobody had the thought to further speak.

“Enough. Regardless of whether Senior Han was the person from that year, he’s currently a genuine Foundation Establishment cultivator, and we have to treat him as such. Don’t ask him anything you shouldn’t, understood?” After the old man muttered to himself for a moment, he became the first to speak.

“I understand.” The youth hesitated for a moment before sincerely replying. His expression eventually returned to normal.

“Alright. Everyone, return to your rooms and refine Qi! Be sure to make your preparations.”

After hearing these words, everyone gave each other a mutual glance before returning to their rooms.

Immediately after, the Clear Sound Courtyard became silent.

About an hour later, the sky grew completely dark.

A person suddenly walked out from a side room in the Clear Sound Courtyard.

This person opened the room door with careful secrecy and took a look in every direction. Then that person silently walked out of the small courtyard.

This person took advantage of the pitch black night to walk to the corner of some faraway place. After some hesitation flashed through her eyes, this person immediately became resolute.

This person took out a small box from her bosom with some nervousness and thought to open it.

Suddenly, this person heard a sigh come from behind them, causing her figure to tremble. This person almost dropped the box she held in hand from fright. This was because the voice sounded much like Han Li's.

“Why are you doing this?” She heard an additional familiar voice almost at the same time; it seemed to be filled with sorrow.

Then this person clearly saw several individuals come out from nearby with bright moonstones in hand. Underneath the dim moonlight, they appeared to have an expression of disbelief.

“Why are you doing this?” The dark-faced man asked with much lament.

“Why what? I'm only testing out a magic tool!” This person's incomparably pale expression gradually returned to normal. She unexpectedly said this as if nothing had happened.

“Hand over whatever's in your hands and let me see what it is!” From the pitch-black darkness, Han Li descended from the sky like a feather and commanded her with a normal expression.

“That's improper! Why do I have to let an outsider look at my magic tool! I naturally won't! Right, Fourth Brother?”

This suspicious figure was actually the young woman among the Five Friends of Meng Mountain.

At this moment, although she was trying her hardest to preserve her ordinary appearance, she firmly held the small box protectively, absolutely unwilling to let it go.

“Fifth Sister, give that item of yours to Senior Han!” The dark-faced old man grimly ordered with an ice-cold tone.

Chapter 304: Internal Decisions

“Eldest Brother, could it be you doubt me?” The fifth sister said with an unyielding false smile.

“It’s because everyone trusts you that they’re giving you this chance. You only have to show us what’s in that box. Take the initiative to open it and dispel everyone’s doubts!” The old man coldly said.

Hearing the old man’s words, this fifth sister’s expression became extremely colorful, continuously alternating between shades of white and red.

When she took a look at the others, they all looked at her with an expression of lament, causing her heart to feel cold. She didn’t know what else to say.

After a moment of consideration, she came to a decision. Putting away the small box, she quickly took out a blue bead that she raised over her head, saying harshly, “Do not pressure me! You should all recognize this Heavenly Lightning Seed. All I want is to leave this place!”

The woman’s actions caused the expressions of the other friends of Meng Mountain to greatly change, especially that youth who had a particularly good impression of her; his appearance was extremely miserable.

“It seems we no longer need to see what’s inside that box! Fifth

Sister, you have truly associated yourself with evil.” The old man furiously yelled and suddenly stepped forward with his hands raised.

“Don’t come over, Eldest Brother! Otherwise I will truly use this on you!” The fifth sister revealed a frantic appearance and brought the blue bead in front of her, making a throwing gesture.

Seeing this, although the old man’s hair went wild, he truly did not dare to approach. After all, he clearly understood the might of this Heavenly Lightning Seed.

“Fifth sister, do you really plan on using that Heavenly Lightning Seed to deal with all of us? That magic tool was given to you because your cultivation was far too low. We all intentionally pooled together our magic stones to buy this to you for self-defense, especially Fourth Brother, who took out all of his savings for it. Now you unexpectedly want to use it to deal with us? Is this not excessive?” The middle-aged woman asked with extreme disappointment.

When the youth to the side heard this, he moved his lips as all sort of feelings welled up in his heart, but he wasn’t able to say anything.

When the fifth sister heard the middle-aged woman’s words, her appearance revealed traces of shame, but they faded away in an instant. She then unyieldingly said, “What’s the use in saying all of this? We are not alike. I must reach Foundation Establishment above all else. Those from the Black Fiend School said that so long as I have enough merits, they won’t just give me a Foundation

Establishment Pill. They would have me directly enter Foundation Establishment through forceful means. Furthermore, their method wouldn't carry any danger!"

When the tall, thin man heard this, he wrinkled his brow and couldn't help but speak.

"Fifth Sister, it isn't too late to turn around! Do you really think you can enter Foundation Establishment without a Foundation Establishment Pill? They are certain to bully a youth such as yourself and deliberately fool you!" The second brother of the five friends said with great sincerity.

"Humph! Second Brother, you need not lecture me! As for whether or not this is true, I already know this. For things to have reached this point, there is nothing to conceal. In truth, I had already become a member of the Black Fiend School when they first appeared two years ago. As a result, I am aware of the school master's great powers which you outsiders couldn't possibly imagine!"

After the young woman coldly snorted, she uttered a series of words that greatly shocked everyone else.

"You already entered the Black Fiend School two years ago? The first time we were captured was your doing?" The young man who had originally kept silent suddenly interrupted with his question.

These words immediately caused the other fours' hearts to surge once more and their expressions to change as they stared at this

young woman. They didn't dare to believe that it was the doing of their fifth sister.

The fifth sister's complexion continuously changed between light and dark. After a moment of hesitation, she slowly said, "Correct. I reported everyone's whereabouts to the Black Fiend School, but I originally had good intentions. I only wanted to give everyone an opportunity to reach Foundation Establishment. With the usual practice of having captives become blood sacrifices, how else would your lives be spared?"

The young woman felt that at this stage, there was nothing left to conceal. Hence, she bluntly spoke the truth.

"Haha, according to your words, us elder siblings should be thanking Fifth Sister!" The dark-faced old man roared with anger, pretending to laugh.

"Regardless of what you thought, I truly had no evil intentions toward you all! Do not force me." The woman said with her beautiful face all twisted. Then she once again lifted the Heavenly Lightning Seed in her hand.

At this moment, Han Li suddenly smiled faintly toward the young woman and said, "Heavenly Lightning Seed. That is truly a good item!"

His words seemed to lag behind as his figure became indistinct. Soon after, he disappeared from his original location.

“You!?” The fifth sister was very quick-witted. Once she saw this, she immediately thought to flick her wrist.

But with the feeling of a light breeze, the hand that held the Heavenly Lightning Seed suddenly tightened. Like a demon, Han Li had appeared closely behind her and was grabbing her flawless wrist.

“This item is extremely dangerous. It would be better to let me take care of it!” With no trace of politeness, Han Li took the Heavenly Lightning Seed by force and put it into his storage pouch.

When the fifth sister saw that the asset she had relied on the most had been dealt with like child’s play by Han Li, her complexion immediately became ashen. She had actually forgotten to struggle for a moment. For the first time, fear appeared in her eyes.

“As she is your adopted sister, I will hand her over to you. So long as she starts off by spilling everything she knows about the Black Fiend School, you can do whatever you want with her. However, don’t be so foolish as to release her and let her report back!” Han Li looked at the rest of the Five Friends of Meng Mountain with a meaningful glance and said this with a relaxed expression.

Soon after, white light flashed from his hands and restrained the woman’s dainty body at the speed of lightning. With her true essence fettered, she could no longer move or use magic power.

Then without the slightest of misgivings, Han Li took the small

box from the young woman's bosom and lightly threw the woman to the absent-minded youth.

"Many thanks, Senior Han!"

The dark-faced old man naturally knew why Han Li had done this. This was a great show of friendship toward them, and therefore he replied gratefully.

Han Li wordlessly waved his hand, causing several streaks of yellow light to appear from thin air. He had used them earlier to stealthily form a soundproofing barrier nearby. Having completed their purpose, he casually recovered them and slowly disappeared into the night.

"Eldest Brother, what will we do?"

The second brother looked at Han Li's vanishing figure with a complicated expression and quietly asked the dark-faced old man.

"First we will bring Fifth Sister back into the room and restrain her. We'll deal with her later after we finish tonight's operations." After the old man muttered to himself for a moment, he said this firmly.

"That is fine. At the very least, it will give everyone time to cool their heads." The second brother repeatedly nodded his head with approval. Then he turned his head to the youth who was holding the young woman and said, "Fourth Brother, first take Fifth Sister

back to the room!” The youth blankly nodded his head. He stiffly turned his body toward the Clear Sound Courtyard and carried back the woman.

Looking at the youth’s miserable appearance from behind, the second brother sighed and looked at him with a pitiful gaze.

At this moment, the middle-aged woman approached him and said, “Fourth Brother will be alright. He has always been infatuated with Fifth Sister. But now...” The middle-aged woman repeatedly shook her head, revealing an intolerant appearance.

“Sigh. I originally thought the two made a good pair, but now that will never come to be.” The old man suddenly showed an extremely exhausted appearance.

The recent series of startling surprises caused this decisive old man with an iron will to feel greatly haggard.

The eldest members of the Five Friends of Meng Mountain then basked in sorrow for a long while.

“Yi! It was Fourth Brother who brought Fifth Sister back?” The old man’s complexion greatly changed as he suddenly thought of something .

“That’s right, Eldest Brother! Is there something wrong? Could it be you felt that Fourth Brother would...”

After the second brother asked this, his complexion soon greatly changed. He anxiously came to a sudden realization that...

Without saying any more meaningless words, they ran into the Clear Sound Courtyard with great haste.

Lagging behind, the middle-aged woman revealed a puzzled expression.

.....

In the Clear Sound Courtyard, the youth sat alone on a char in the guest hall with a blank expression. He appeared to be in a daze.

In front of him, the dark-faced old man and the tall, thin man looked at each other in dismay.

No trace of the young woman could be seen.

“Second Brother, Senior’s restrictions are still present on Fifth Sister’s body. Hurry and chase after her! I will go to beg for Senior Han’s forgiveness and ask him to take action. We mustn’t allow Fifth Sister to return and make a report to the Black Fiend School. If nobody had come to her rescue, then kill her!” The old man imposingly said.

“I understand, Eldest Brother!”

The second brother was stunned at first, but he immediately realized that now was not the time to be merciful and lenient. He solemnly nodded his head in agreement and rushed out.

“Fourth Brother, you.... Sigh!” After the old man saw the thin, tall man leave, he turned his head to look at the youth.

However, seeing that his mind had drifted away, the old man didn’t have the heart to say anything further. He could only sigh and go find Han Li.

.....

“It doesn’t matter. If she ran, then so be it! Since Second Brother Gui couldn’t chase her down, then there’s no need to further pursue her.”

Contrary to the old man’s expectations, when Han Li heard that the young woman had fled the Qin Residence, he didn’t reveal the slightest of alarm. Instead, he acted as if her escape made no difference.

Chapter 305: Last Resort

Since Han Li said as such, although the old man was filled with doubt, he could only return first.

Not long after, the second brother returned with an ashen face. As expected, he hadn't managed to catch up to that Fifth Sister. Fortunately, Han Li's words assured them that they did not have to worry about incurring Han Li's wrath.

At the time, in an extremely remote alley within Yuejing, a slender figure staggered towards the south district; the faint moonlight revealed her to be the flustered "Fifth Sister".

As she ran, she incessantly glanced behind her, as if she were afraid that someone would suddenly appear behind her.

Although this woman's magic power had largely been suppressed by Han Li, her divine sense as a cultivator was still mostly there; upon discovering that nobody else appeared behind her, she finally became somewhat more relaxed in her heart.

Thankfully, when the youth let her go, he had slipped her a concealment talisman. This was the only reason why she could have escaped to here.

Not long after she had escaped, the woman discovered a tall thin man's figure sweeping overhead. Fortunately, she had swiftly used the talisman, successfully dealing with the situation.

At this time, her Second Brother did not actually go chasing in another direction; instead, he had already returned to the Qin Residence. This was why she dared to run around in the alleys so boldly.

The place she was headed towards was one of the Black Fiend School's secret strongholds in the south district. As long as she was able to precisely report Han Li's location to her superiors, she will have contributed much to the sect! Thus, she would immediately be one step closer to her dream of entering the Foundation Establishment stage.

That year, when she and a few other Black Fiend School outer court disciples who had performed quite well saw that their mysterious school master's divine methods allowed a Qi Condensation disciple to establish their foundation, they immediately chose to dedicate themselves to the Black Fiend School so that they could also have a similar fate. Once their contributions reached a certain level, they could also obtain the School Master's favor and aid in entering Foundation Establishment.

As far as she knew, most outer court disciples willing to be ordered around by the Black Fiend School all had this intention in mind; thus, she never believed that she had made any mistakes in her decisions.

After all, based on her natural talent, she had pretty much reached the peak of her cultivation base. If she wanted to advance another layer, or even form her foundation, she had no other

choice.

Although she felt some regret towards her sworn brothers and sisters, since she had embarked on this path, she could only cut off all her natural affection for them. If they were caught, whether they were used as blood servants or forced to follow orders once again depended on the intentions of her superiors. She did not intend to plead for mercy on their behalf; in the future, she would only live for herself and herself alone.

As she thought these vicious thoughts in her heart, she began to dream about entering Foundation Establishment; it seemed as if her footsteps also sped up significantly.

Although she was still quite a distance away, she finally saw the street opening to the south district. But just as she became excited and wanted to speed up her steps, she suddenly felt that there seemed to be something wet running down her nose. Baffled, she wiped it with her hand, but what she saw her make entire figure tremble. Her expression was one of fear and surprise.

Her five snow-white fingers were covered in a sticky, dark-red liquid.

“This is?”

Fifth Junior Sister panicked and attempted to wipe away the black blood under her nose, but at this time, the blood from her nose began to flood out as if a gate had been opened; in the blink of an eye, fresh blood began to flow out from even her eyes and ears.

The young woman could only feel her entire body losing strength. Once her legs softened, she directly fell towards the ground.

At this time, her entire body was incomparably cold; no warmth could be found near her heart. She wanted to call out for help, but her throat was incredibly dry and could not let out any sound.

Afterwards, her divine sense slowly began to fade. Not long after, she slipped into a eternal darkness.

The next sunrise, the mortals who bypassed this place would be surprised to find that a puddle of black, filthy blood had suddenly appeared, forcing them to take a detour. It incited quite a few harsh comments.

In the moment that the young woman had been killed, Han Li was in his room inspecting all of the magic tools and talismans he had, preparing to move out.

After nimbly cleaning up, Han Li glanced at the round moon outside his window; he revealed a somewhat lonely expression, then suddenly said to himself under his breath:

“It should be about now...the poison should have activated.

After saying this, Han Li gently sighed, then left the room, heading towards the Clear Sound Courtyard.

In reality, Han Li's suspicions about that Fifth Junior Sister had begun when he inspected the poison afflicting the Five Friends of Meng Mountain. Although she had also been poisoned, its toxicity was much less than the everyone else's; even if it were to flare up, it most likely would not have taken her life.

On the other hand, Han Li had only gotten rid of the blood curse on her after expending a ton of effort. This meant that when the young woman had received the blood curse, it must have been uninterrupted; otherwise, it would not have left such a deep mark on her divine sense.

Keeping a cautious mindset, Han Li deliberately placed a small restriction when removing the young woman's blood curse.

The restriction's usage was very simple; it would cause the residual medicinal strength in the antidotes to temporarily aggregate in some area of the body. When needed, it would suddenly turn into an extreme poison. That was because those two bottles of pills contained "Impermanence Pills"; they could be used as medicine for curing poison, or they could be turned into poison via a specific method. They were one of the spoils Han Li had collected in the battlefield.

As for the other friends from Meng Mountain whom he had secretly called over, he made them see firsthand the reality that she had been planted as a spy before capturing the woman, using the opportunity to touch a few spots of her body using spiritual power.

These touches, apart from being able to restrict a large portion of her magic power, also activated this hidden restriction. As long as Han Li did not deactivate it in some time, the woman would die soundlessly and without a trace, as mentioned previously.

As for whether or not he should kill this woman, Han Li had felt somewhat conflicted in his heart due to her close ties with the Five Friends of Meng Mountain. However, he definitely could not allow this woman to leak out his relationship with the Qin Clan; that was his bottom line.

Activating the restriction at the time was only Han Li's cautious fallback plan. He never expected that it would actually have some use.

This was why Han Li had been so calm and did not panic at all when the dark-faced elder came back to report in.

In reality, if this woman had obediently remained in the Qin Residence as a hostage, Han Li would have repressed the restriction from flaring up inside her.

But now that she had escaped, regardless if the Five Friends of Meng Mountain had purposefully let her go, the young woman who had disappeared from this world would be unable to send any reports to the Black Fiend School. In addition, he had done the Five Friends of Meng Mountain a big favor, which should be extremely beneficial in reinforcing them!

Upon entering the Clear Sound Courtyard, the dark-faced old

man and the others had already made their preparations; although they weren't too spirited, they were quietly waiting for Han Li's arrival.

“Let's depart!” Han Li said crisply after entering the room.

.....

Under the night sky, Prince Xin's residence appeared similar to a gigantic, strange beast, deterring any petty thieves that had their sights set on the mansion.

But tonight, Han Li and the others cast a concealment technique and silently snuck in.

At this time of night, despite the commotion that had been stirred up due to the old Immortal Wu's disappearance, the majority of people in Prince Xin's residence had gone to sleep a long time ago apart from a few guards and sentries; at this moment, most of them were sound asleep.

Upon entering the palace, Han Li immediately found one of the night guards and cast the Soul Controlling Technique, causing him to reveal Steward Wang and the young prince's residences, then knocked him out with one palm.

Then, he said to the four people behind him, “Between the two of them, the young prince's cultivation layer is the lowest, so we'll first make our move against him before dealing with Steward

Wang.”

The now Four Friends from Meng Mountain had already been shocked to learn that the people in Prince Xin’s palace were from the Black Fiend School. None of them were surprised by Han Li’s words, nodding their heads in assent. Although this young prince was a relative of the royal family, them being cultivators meant that his status as a core disciple of the Black Fiend School was even more taboo.

Next, the few of them silently drew near to the young prince’s residence, a small, three-story tower.

There were numerous sentries nearby as well; out of a fear that these people would make trouble once the fighting began, the Four Friends of Meng Mountain stepped forwards and knocked them out before Han Li even made a move.

As he observed their practiced motions, Han Li secretly nodded his head and felt that having some subordinates was worthwhile!

Because they had gathered from the sentry that the young prince lived on the third floor, Han Li didn’t let them go upstairs; instead, he placed them in the surroundings to ambush whoever came their way.

This way, if the young prince happened to be too slippery and escaped from Han Li’s grasp, they could delay this person and give Han Li some additional time.

Of course, for fear of alerting Steward Wang at the other end of the palace, Han Li didn't try to conserve any magic power and casted an extremely large soundproof enchantment that spread out hundreds of feet with the small tower as the center, encompassing it all inside.

Then, Han Li gently flew to the third floor and, in a flash, entered the tower.

The Four Friends of Meng Mountain gazed at the small tower's third floor alertly, not even daring to blink. Soon after, a person's shadow flashed out from inside the tower extremely quickly.

When these people discovered that it was Han Li, instantly their hearts relaxed, but at the same time, they felt that something was off.

Did this Senior Han Li succeed so quickly? But how come they never even saw the young prince?

Han Li descended from the tower, his face cloudy. Upon seeing the four people gather around him, he said, knitting his eyebrows:

“There was no one on top of the tower, only a mannequin created from an illusion technique. It seems like he was occupied with something.”

These words caused them to stare at each other, not knowing what to do for quite some time.

Chapter 306: Crisis

“Could it be that they fled in advance because Fifth Sister fed them our information? Or could this be some sort of trap?” the middle-aged woman asked with a face full of worry.

“Impossible. If the enemy truly set up a trap, it would have triggered as soon as we entered. At that moment, we wouldn’t have been able to guard against it.” Han Li shook his head and rejected this.

When the others heard Han Li’s words, they couldn’t help but let out a breath of relief, but they still looked around in every direction. As expected, they didn’t find anything unusual.

“Senior, what should we do next? Should we first retreat and act on a different day?” the second brother asked, hesitant.

“Let’s first go and find that Steward Wang! If he is not here, then we will end today’s operation and retreat immediately,” Han Li coldly replied.

After hearing Han Li’s words, the Four Friends of Meng Mountain looked at each other and then silently nodded their heads.

Han Li released some Daoist magics to retrieve his boundary cores and took the lead, stealthily heading to the side of the Prince’s estate. The others then closely followed behind him.

Although Steward Wang's residence wasn't multistoried like the young prince's, it was still a small three-room courtyard.

When Han Li and the others arrived nearby, one of the rooms was unexpectedly faintly lit, as if someone had yet to go to sleep.

Han Li raised his brow. It seemed this trip wouldn't be fruitless.

With this thought, Han Li made a few precautionary incantation gestures to conceal himself and immediately used the nameless Qi restraining technique he had just learned. The spiritual Qi of his entire body immediately dissipated without a trace, as if he had become a common mortal.

Han Li's figure flashed, and he suddenly appeared crouched by the wall outside of the room, pressing his ear against it.

Because this Steward Wang gave Han Li a great feeling of danger, Han Li didn't have the confidence to release his spiritual sense and have it probe the room for information.

However, after Han Li listened for only a short moment, he flew back with a drastically changed countenance. He immediately concealed himself behind a huge flowering tree.

This scene greatly surprised the Four Friends of Meng Mountain, who all witnessed from nearby. However, they then heard Han Li's voice, "Be careful. The young prince is in the room. Act with your

own discretion!”

These words immediately caused their hearts to tremble. They all coincidentally held their breaths and carefully looked at the room, not daring to make the slightest noise.

Creak. The door opened. A youth wearing a light green embroidered gown walked out. This was none other than the young prince of Prince Xin’s residence.

After he turned his head and softly said a few words toward the room, he walked a few steps into the courtyard. The door shut itself behind him.

Soon after, the light behind the room’s paper shutter flashed several times before being completely extinguished. It seemed whoever was inside had retired for the night.

Han Li expressionlessly stared at the prince’s every movement. What caused him to feel puzzled was that he didn’t feel the slightest magic power from him. However, a faint feeling of danger was enough for Han Li to determine he should be a disciple of the Black Fiend School.

Perhaps because he was still in his own home, this young prince didn’t return in any hurry. Instead, he walked around like a common mortal, stretching himself and looking at the bright moon in the sky. He suddenly sighed.

Soon after, he actually paced around the small courtyard with a worried expression as if he was occupied with some difficult problem.

It seemed he wouldn't leave for a short while, causing the Four Friends of Meng Mountain to feel greatly helpless!

Acting now naturally wouldn't do. Because Steward Wang was in the side room, a fight would naturally rouse him and cause no small problem.

The best method would be to wait for the young prince to return to his dwelling and strike the targets separately.

Fortunately, these people were all cultivators and had much patience. Because they were all well-concealed, they hadn't exposed themselves in the slightest during this entire time.

After the time it takes to eat a meal, this young prince eventually stopped strolling around and walked out of the courtyard.

This caused the ambushers to feel joy!

However, the following scene greatly surprised these people, immediately causing their rage to soar.

Just when the young prince was about to walk out of the courtyard, he suddenly used an illusion technique. At an unknown time, he had taken out a set of clothes and quickly changed into

them. He was masked and wearing blood red in the blink of an eye, dressed just like the person who told them to rob and kill Han Li.

Although the four friends were filled with rage, they knew what was important and resisted their impulses with great difficulty. Now, they had great trust in Han Li's words. They knew they were pursuing the correct target.

Having changed his clothes, the young prince faintly released a demonic Qi from his body and strong magic power fluctuations of the eleventh layer of Qi Condensation. He did not return to his dwelling. Instead, he threw a long, blood-red magic tool into the sky, and with a flash, he flew out on it.

Seeing this, Han Li's eyes flashed with yellow light, and he immediately transmitted a message to the other four, "Follow him. Regardless of where he goes, make sure to capture him as he is on his way."

Heeding Han Li's orders, the Four friends of Meng Mountain impatiently followed after him on their flying magic tools.

Han Li, who was left alone to monitor Steward Wang, had deliberately waited in place a while longer.

Seeing that nothing strange occurred in the room, he hesitated for a moment. Still not at ease, he threw out his Divine Wind Boat and followed after them.

The speed of Han Li's Divine Wind Boat couldn't be compared to the Four Friends of Meng Mountain's magic tools. After a short moment of following their spiritual Qi marks, he arrived at a desolate temple outside of Yuejing.

The Four Friends of Meng Mountain were floating in midair. They were bustling around with an ashen complexion and an appearance of continuous indecision. After seeing Han Li, they immediately welcomed him with pleasant surprise.

"What's the matter?" Seeing this, Han Li wrinkled his brow and slowly asked.

"We followed him here, but just as we thought to act, he suddenly made his way into the abandoned temple. We don't know whether that young ghost discovered us. Also, there are restrictions laid down at this temple, what appear to be formation spells. We rushed in for a moment but luckily, we immediately withdrew. We didn't dare to try again, fearing that there may be others lying in ambush within." Seeing Han Li displeased, the dark-faced old man hastily stepped forward to explain.

"Formation spell?" When Han Li heard this, he felt as if he had a great headache.

Han Li wasn't proficient in the Dao of Formation Spells. However, as he was facing these people, he indifferently said, "Let me take a look at it!" Then, he took a careful look with the Heaven's Eye Technique.

As expected, the area surrounding the ruined temple had abnormal spiritual Qi fluctuations. But after Han Li took a clear look, he let out a large sigh.

This was only an exceptionally simple Falling Stone Formation, one of the simplest earth attribute formation spells. Although rogue and Qi Condensation cultivators may find this formidable, a small formation spell of this grade was something Han Li could easily break through with brute force even if he didn't know the specific method to break this formation.

With this thought, Han Li wordlessly touched his storage pouch and then scattered something from his hands. Immediately after, four tall beast puppets appeared in front of him. Having previously suffered from Han Li's puppet technique, the four friends subconsciously took a few steps back.

Han Li didn't pay attention to their alarm and controlled the puppet beasts. They all opened their mouths at the same time and shot huge beams of light with the thickness of a bowl toward the ruined temple.

Just as the beams of light were about to strike at the ruined temple, a huge semi-circle barrier of faint light suddenly appeared, completely covering the small temple. It was faintly emitting yellow light.

The beams of light struck the light barrier.

The yellow light barrier immediately rippled and started to

tremble, rigidly withstanding the assault of light beams.

But at this moment, Han Li acted without the slightest hesitation. He took out his pair of Black Dragon's Claws and immediately enlarged them to the size of about three meters. Then he fiercely threw them out toward the light barrier.

The sound of a sharp rupture rang out. The light barrier was no longer able to endure the succession of strong attacks and had thoroughly collapsed. The Falling Stone Formation disappeared into thin air.

Having seen this, the Four Friends of Meng Mountain let out a cold breath.

They did not fully understand what it meant to break a formation spell with brute force.

This proved that Han Li's offensive strength was at the very least several times more powerful than the formation spell barrier's power. Otherwise, the formation would easily dissipate an attack with equivalent power since it drew assistance from the ingenuity of formation principles. The others had just recently suffered a bit from this formation spell and judged this Falling Stone Formation to be quite formidable.

"Descend! We absolutely can't let him get away!" Han Li said with an icy expression.

As of now, the Four Friends of Meng Mountain had completely accepted Han Li and immediately agreed, charging downward.

But at this moment, Han Li and the others heard a sneer from behind them.

“Are you looking for me? This temple was only a temporary stronghold for my school. Right now, there is no one inside!”

This voice immediately caused the Four Friends of Meng Mountain, who were halfway through their charge, to nearly fall off their magic tools from fright. They hastily turned their heads to look, but their faces immediately became pale from lack of blood.

About a hundred meters above Han Li and the four friends was the young prince who they had just pursued and a similarly dressed thin, shriveled man next to him. Beside them were over ten black-clothed masked men. From the looks of it, they were just like the Four Friends of Meng Mountain, nearby cultivators whom the Black Fiend School had placed restrictions on.

However, what was most eye-catching was the large, bald, eyebrowless man with a strong spirit.

He also wore blood-red clothing, but he didn't bother to conceal his face.

This person was a Foundation Establishment cultivator just like

Han Li!

Seeing this, the Four Friends of Meng Mountain all felt an urge to escape death.

Chapter 307: Blood Servant

When Han Li heard the young prince's voice, his complexion slightly changed, turning a bit pale.

But when he slowly turned around, his expression returned to normal; the slightest panic couldn't be seen. Instead, a trace of a cold smile could be seen from the corner of his mouth. He coldly looked at those from the Black Fiend School and that bald Foundation Establishment cultivator.

Han Li's calm expression influenced the Four Friends of Meng Mountain, whose hearts grew slightly calmer. After giving each other a mutual glance, they all acted in concert and flew behind Han Li, standing in opposition against those from the Black Fiend School.

"It's you! Aren't you that person from the Qin Residence? You are a Foundation Establishment cultivator?"

When the young prince saw Han Li's appearance, he had an extremely astonished expression. Although that thin, shriveled man who stood beside him had remained silent, great surprise could be seen from his eyes.

Only the large bald man who was rigidly staring at Han Li looked upon him with a solemn appearance. He suddenly said, "Be a bit careful. That person is a Foundation Establishment cultivator and is also a layer higher than me. It is likely I'll need to lay out a Black Wind Formation and draw assistance from the formation to

capture him.”

Hearing the large bald man say this, the young prince didn't show any worry on his face. Instead, he asked with pleasant surprise, “Sir Blood Servant, if that's the case, the rewards for offering this person as a blood sacrifice for the School Master's cultivation should be quite good, no?”

When the large man heard this, he answered with a chuckle, “Of course. All of the Foundation Establishment cultivators we captured so far were only at initial Foundation Establishment. This person's blood essence is certain to be far greater than the previous few!”

With confirmation from the large bald man, the young prince greedily turned his head to look at Han Li and suddenly laughed heartily.

“Good, very good!” Regardless of the reason why your esteemed self has come here, don't think that you will leave this place alive.”

“Lay down the Black Wind Formation! Go!”

After the young prince stopped smiling, he shouted this with a cold expression and a stern voice.

Those black-clothed individuals immediately took out large flags that were as black as ink and quickly flew around Han Li, surrounding him. Furthermore, they started to wave the flags in

their hands.

“You all just defend. Let me handle them.” After Han Li indifferently said this to the Four Friends of Meng Mountain, his image became indistinct and disappeared from his original location without a trace.

“Be careful!”

When the bald large man saw Han Li disappear, he loudly shouted from bewilderment, but it was already too late.

Han Li appeared behind a black-clothed person in an instant. The cultivator who was just waving the flag had immediately stopped and blankly stood in place. Then without any warning, his head soon rolled onto the floor and blood fountained out of the headless body before falling to the floor.

It was at the moment that the large bald man had just finished the last word of his shout.

This scene caused the other flag-holding cultivators' hearts to tremble. They hadn't even thought what they should do! Han Li appeared behind another cultivator from thin air, and the man promptly died with his head also rolling on the floor.

Like this, the other black-clothed cultivators didn't dare to hesitate. They stopped waving their black flags one after another, and instead, they slapped on defensive barriers of all colors and

took out all sorts of defensive magic tools.

But in the blink of an eye, two more black-clothed disciples in the process of preparing their defenses suffered Han Li's cruel attacks and unexpectedly turned to corpses.

“Brat, you're courting death!”

When the large bald man saw this, he gave a deep roar and released strange black-red lights from his eyes. His entire body released a bloody radiance as he charged toward Han Li at an astonishing speed.

Han Li took a cold look at the large man's stance along with the bloody sphere of light covering his body before taking a look at the black-clothed men looking at him with alarm from within their defensive light barriers. At that moment, their figures decisively shot over a hundred meters away from the Four Friends of Meng Mountain.

The large man charging through the air released a bestial roar. Without the slightest hesitation, he immediately changed direction and continued to pounce toward Han Li and the others, but for some unknown reason, he didn't take out any magic tools.

Seeing this, the second brother's mind moved. He saw an opportunity and immediately raised his hand, silently shooting out a green triangular thorn toward the large man's front.

When the large bald man saw this magic tool fly toward him, his face turned into an evil grin. Not only did he not stop, but he also rushed toward to welcome it.

The tall and thin second brother grew very happy and excitedly said, “This guy is out of luck. My magic tool is a fine high-quality magic tool. It will certainly make him... Ah! How is this possible? My green pointed thorn!”

Just as he started rambling, he was stunned by the scene before his eyes and involuntarily cried out.

When this triangular thorn touched the blood-red light covering the large bald man, the blood-red light radiance seemed alive. It suddenly swept in the magic tool force, and no matter how much the magic tool struggled, it was unable to break free in the slightest.

“Hehe, you dare to make a show of such a minuscule thorn!” The large man wildly laughed and extended a large blood red hand, forcibly grabbing the triangular thorn. The green light of the magic tool in his grasp immediately scattered; it had thoroughly turned to scrap, completely devoid of Spiritual Qi.

At this moment, not only did the Four Friends of Meng Mountain appear greatly fearful, but Han Li’s heart also heavily thumped. This large bald man definitely didn’t cultivate any common cultivation arts. It was most likely a top-grade devilish art like the Ghost Spirit Sect’s young master.

The large bald man didn't allow Han Li and the others to think further and arrived in front of them in an instant. A huge blood-red fist was raised and fiercely smashed against the light barrier that the Four Friends of Meng Mountain had jointly erected.

Peng! The light barrier that four Qi Condensation cultivators had jointly released was left with a deep depression after just one strike and immediately grew very dark.

The complexions of the four friends suddenly changed. Such a ferocious punch would likely turn common defensive magic tools into scrap metal.

“Senior, could you...”

The dark-faced old man turned his head in a hurry and wanted to see whether Han Li had some method to block the opponent.

After all, against the opponent's attack, their combined defensive barrier was unable to take another hit.

Without speaking, Han Li raised his hand and released a dazzling small white light shield. In the blink of an eye, it grew several times larger and steadily placed itself in front of their barrier, just in time to receive the large bald man's huge bloody fist.

Bang!

The ear-piercing sound of the man's great strike resonated

through both Heaven and Earth. The nearby cultivators who didn't guard against the vibration lost their balance and nearly fell to the floor.

The Four Friends of Meng Mountain were also off balance for a long while. The only ones whose expressions had remained the same were Han Li and the large bald man.

Han Li expressionlessly looked at the white scale shield. He saw that although the shield had successfully endured the punch, there was slight depression on its originally flat and even surface. He couldn't help but be secretly fearful.

Han Li clearly knew that how sturdy this white scale shield was and couldn't help but grow even more dreadfully wary of the large man.

With this thought, Han Li patted his storage pouch without further hesitation.

Suddenly, two streaks of black light and six streaks of gold light shot out simultaneously toward the large man without restraint. The grandeur of the raging torrent of howling released from the many top-grade magic tools greatly startled the large bald man. He couldn't help but reveal slight fear from his face.

He wildly roared, and his body suddenly flourished with a great blood-red brilliance. A moment later, his entire body had been completely enveloped in blood-red radiance, turning into a huge blood-red sphere of light about ten meters large that floated

motionlessly in the air.

Seeing this good opportunity, Han Li's Gold Beetle Swarm Blades and Black Dragon's Claws naturally did not show mercy and fiercely stabbed toward. What resulted, however, left Han Li feeling that something strange had occurred.

Despite his magic tools chopping down on the sphere of light, the slightest movement hadn't occurred from within. Furthermore, his magic tools weren't able to penetrate more than half a foot into the sphere. This protective barrier-like defense had completely withstood his attack.

Feeling slightly impatient, Han Li suddenly thought of something and hastily looked around him. The scene before him caused him to feel great danger.

Under the command of the young prince and whom he suspected to be Steward Wang, the black-clothed men had become organized once more. They had faintly surrounded Han Li and the four friends and were waving the black flags in their hand with all their might. The black flags had already begun to hum a ghostly wail. A strange black fog began to continuously revolve around the black flags.

This scene caused Han Li to recall the scene at the spirit stone mine with the "Azure Yang Devil Fire" that could destroy anything. As this summoning ceremony was quite similar to that of the Azure Yang Devil Fire, how could Han Li allow them to complete it!

With this thought, Han Li immediately pointed his hand and recalled the white scale shield. Then without an explanation, he forced it into the dark-faced old man's hand and coldly said, "I'll let you temporarily use it! I'm going to dispose of the others first."

Han Li's figure flashed and appeared outside of the protective barrier. Furthermore, the magic tools that were indiscriminately attacking the blood-red light sphere whistled through the air as they flew toward Han Li. As they continuously revolved around him, they continued to emit a hum.

Chapter 308: A Display Of Skill

Han Li glanced at the few magic tools next to him; then, he suddenly reached into his storage pouch and pulled out three identical small tridents.

He gently tossed them out, and they instantly turned into three streaks of red light, shooting towards a black-clothed cultivator.

The set of “Flying Flame Chain Tridents” was spoils he had plundered from some pitiful unknown soul after the fight with the white spider. Its power was quite good. Furthermore, because it was a set and was easy to control, Han Li had kept it.

Han Li then pointed at his magic tools. After the two black and six gold streaks of light let out a long cry, they all flew off in different directions.

At this moment, the frightening power of Han Li’s Great Development Technique was truly displayed. He was unexpectedly able to control so many magic tools without the slightest of disorder. Seeing so many top-grade magic tools rushing towards them, the flag-holding cultivators revealed shock. How could they have any intentions of receiving those attacks?

After Han Li hastily threw three streaks of red light toward a black flag, the cultivator holding it thought to dodge by flying on a magic tool. However, after the black flag tangled with the three red streaks of light, it immediately erupted into a ball of black light and broke apart into minuscule pieces.

Then the three streaks of red light arrived in front of another cultivator without stopping and fiercely struck at his protective barrier.

Unfortunately for him, it was only the low-grade barrier of a Qi Condensation cultivator. How could it possibly block the strikes of three top-grade magic tools? It was only able to withstand the strike for a short moment before it ruptured and disappeared without a trace.

With despair in the cultivator's eyes, he saw the three streaks of red light lightly wind around him, turning him into a huge fireball and then thoroughly reducing him to ash.

At this moment, the two black and six golden streaks of light flew above two other cultivators and broke through their defenses with similar ease, chopping them in half.

All of a sudden, the other cultivators grew frantic. Naturally, they found the preservation of their own lives for more important than laying down this great formation.

The majority of them immediately turned around and flew off. A few cultivations great of courage and lacking of mind released their proud magic tools to stop Han Li's attack with all their might.

It was a pity that Han Li had no intention of tangling with them and completely suppressed them without restraint.

Oven ten red, black, and gold streaks of light ran around like like a swarm of bees. Any attempt to block these streaks with magic tools was like striking an egg against a stone; they would immediately shatter into pieces and disappear from this world. As for for the magic tool wielders, Han Li naturally did not let them go and easily disposed of them.

At this moment, apart from the few black-clothed cultivators who had ran off about a thousand meters away, only the young prince and the masked man who was likely Steward Wang remained, looking on with incredulity Not the slightest of power was displayed from the “Black Wind Formation” as Han Li had the foresight to destroy it beforehand.

Han Li turned his gaze towards the two, causing them to inwardly shout ‘Not Good!’. At the same time, they put up their guard and emitted faint black light from their bodies. Their figures instantly became concealed within dense dark Qi.

“Humph! What deception!” Han Li said with a cold laugh.

Although he didn’t know what technique these two used, it seemed very similar to the large bald man’s devilish technique. However, he didn’t know why the black light on their body differed from the large man’s blood-red light. Could it be the difference in their cultivation level? Han Li pondered with puzzlement.

Han Li didn’t know that at this time, the two were complaining

without end!

Han Li's cultivation and incisive magic tools far exceeded what the two had anticipated.

It wasn't that they hadn't seen Foundation Establishment cultivators before, but rather that the might of this Foundation Establishment cultivator, Han Li, was incomparable to the Foundation Establishment Altar Masters of their own school. Let alone one on one, perhaps even two or three simultaneous Altar Masters may not prove to be his match.

His extremely quick movement technique that was almost indiscernible from the eye. His ability to control over ten strange magic tools by himself at the same time. These were all feats that they had never heard of before.

Now it seemed that even Sir Blood Servant may not prove to be his opponent even though he had used a secret technique!

Although these two were conceited about their strength as Qi Condensation cultivators, they didn't dare to be presumptuous as to believe that if the two joined together, they would be able to fight against Han Li. Thus, although they released a secret technique from their body, not only did they not advance, but they also started to carefully retreat slowly.

Unlike the two, the Four Friends of Meng Mountain were absolutely dumbstruck by Han Li's godly display of strength.

Although these individuals had known that Han Li's strength was great, they didn't know how powerful his great strength was because they had nothing to refer or compare it to.

But now they've seen Han Li take on over ten cultivators with cultivation similar to their own and kill five or six of them in an instant; the survivors fled with fear, not daring to turn their head. Such profound cultivation! Such technique! The four friends had been completely won over.

Han Li took a deep breath. When he thought to capture the young prince and Steward Wang at the same time, he suddenly heard a brutal mad roar filled with limitless insane rage coming from the blood-red sphere of light.

When the young prince and his companion heard this, they couldn't help but look at each other with pleasant surprise.

Han Li's expression grew solemn. No longer able to deal with the two in front of him, he hastily slapped his storage pouch, causing a small exquisite magic tool to appear in his hand.

Without the slightest of hesitation, Han Li threw it toward the sphere of blood-red light.

Han Li had thrown down a small yellow cup, and in an instant, it became a huge cup more than fifteen meters wide. This was the "Heaven Shrouding Cup" Han Li acquired from the spoils of the Masked Moon Sect cultivator Xuan Le. During that time, this magic tool was able to trap that incomparably fierce blood spider;

it was clearly difficult to deal with.

Dāng! This cup accurately landed on the blood-red light sphere and covered it in a short amount of time. The roar could no longer be heard.

Seeing Han Li's action, the pair's joy-filled faces turned blank.

Could it be that Sir Blood Servant had been so easily detained?

Han Li then turned his head over and suddenly gave the two a strange smile before raising his hands.

In the blink of an eye, countless fireballs sprang forth from his hands and shot forth like a violent storm. The nearby sky had been dyed fire-red.

This scene frightened the pair, and they hastily released defensive disk magic tools in front of them.

A continuous stream of deafening explosions sounded out, leaving the young prince stunned.

Because there simply were too many fireballs, a few had directly slipped through the barrier and directly hit the young prince, scattering much of the black Qi that protected his body.

With a battered body, the young prince was frightened and

angry. He clearly understood this great power had definitely been brought forth with great amounts of talismans.

While waiting for this wave of fireballs to force their way through, he suddenly heard a miserable shriek from his side, causing him to tremble and hastily take a look.

He let out a breath of cold air. What he saw left him in complete terror.

The thin, shriveled masked man originally by his side was in Han Li's hands, powerless. The black Qi protecting his body had completely scattered, and blood poured from his body. Unexpectedly, he only had one arm left.

This scene caused the young prince to become apprehensive; a truly unsuppressible fear of Han Li had stemmed in his heart. He couldn't help but curse that blood servant for being so useless.

Han Li gave an ice-cold look at the young prince and then ripped off the mask from his captive with no trace of politeness, revealing the face of the Prince Xin's Steward Wang. Steward Wang's originally shriveled appearance was now twisted from the pain of losing his arm.

"Impossible. How did you capture him? Our fiendish Qi body protection isn't so easily broken through!" The young prince exclaimed this in one breath. He suddenly raised both his hands and fiercely shot over ten streaks of black light toward Han Li.

Han Li's blank expression suddenly had a trace of a sneer.

He raised a single hand, summoning a black shield-like object in front of him.

In the end, those powerful streaks of black light shooting towards him only resulted in a few muffled sounds.

The young prince stared with surprise, discovering that this "shield" was actually a huge tortoise shell. However, this tortoise shell was black and void of light. It should have been specially refined.

Seeing this, the young prince averted his eyes and shrouded his body with black light. He flew like lightning, wanting to escape just like the other cultivators.

However, as a target for live capture, how could Han Li let him go that easily? After his figure flashed, Han Li easily caught up to the young prince, appearing right in front of him. He then raised his hand, and a huge azure sword over nine meters long appeared out of thin air. Without restraint, it chopped directly at the young prince.

The young prince saw this and smiled in his heart.

The fiendish Qi protecting his body corroded all sorts of magic tools. Simply not fearing any injury from the huge sword, he used this opportunity to flee with all his power.

With this thought, the young prince's figure shot up in order to sweep past Han Li up above.

Chapter 309: Demonic Transformation

“You can’t withstand it! Quickly, dodge!”

Resisting sharp pain, Steward Wang loudly shouted while in Han Li’s grasp in an attempt to warn the young prince.

Obviously, his warning came too late.

Hearing this, the young prince subconsciously leaned to the side, wanting to dodge the point of the huge azure sword. However, the sword suddenly changed its cleave to a slice, softly sweeping past his legs. The black Qi protecting his body scattered from the attack and didn’t have the slightest of effect.

As a result, the sword sliced through his two calves with great ease. The young prince loudly shouted, fainting on the scene.

This person who had lived a life of luxury since birth, though he may be exceptionally shrewd, had never experienced such sufferings before. Naturally, he wasn’t able to bear the pain of lacerated legs.

However, this scene scared Han Li; because he hadn’t used the azure essence sword streak in so long, he believed that he had accidentally killed him!

After figuring out what just happened, Han Li happily laughed as he picked this person up and flew back to the Four Friends of Meng

Mountain.

Han Li grew very cheerful from his decisive victory, but at the same time, he felt somewhat puzzled.

From the feeling of danger the young prince and Steward Wang gave him, these two should've been far more dangerous. However, he was able to capture them alive very easily. Could it be that his mysterious intuition had started to fail him?

Han Li shook his head and felt something was strange.

At this moment, the black-clothed men lingering around had witnessed this scene and knew that remaining there any longer would be unfavorable. After exchanging mutual glances, they started to scatter and escape in the blink of an eye, leaving behind no traces of them ever being there.

Han Li had no intention of chasing after them. There were only foreign elements, much like the Four Friends of Meng Mountain. They were fundamentally unworthy of a strenuous pursuit.

As he thought this, he flew back to the Four Friends of Meng Mountain and casually threw down his two captives, saying indifferently, "Treat their injuries. We still need to interrogate them!"

The youth and the second brother immediately acted, catching the two. They didn't dare to show the slightest negligence.

At this moment, not only did the Four Friends of Meng Mountain appear respectful, but their hearts were also filled with reverence toward him. Han Li's recent display of great and profound power left them with an unforgettable impression.

"Senior's cultivation is truly profound. It has greatly broadened these juniors' perspective," the dark-faced old man said with complete respect.

"It was nothing but minor skill!"

When Han Li saw the four friends' expressions of reverence, he couldn't help but feel somewhat proud. However, he put on an appearance that such a thing wasn't worth mentioning, causing the four to feel that Senior Han was profoundly mysterious!

Dang! Dang! At this moment, these loud bangs caused Han Li's complexion to slightly change.

The four friends hastily looked over. After the middle-aged woman took a clear look, she pointed with a panicked appearance and shouted to Han Li, "Senior, quickly look! Your magic tool!"

Han Li had already turned his head over to look at the "Heaven Shrouding Cup" trapping the large bald man. Startlingly loud noises rang from within, accompanied by unimaginable deformations appearing on its exterior.

With each following sound, the wall of the Heaven Shrouding Cup protruded even more. After over ten more large sounds, the cup was no longer recognizable, and slightest resemblance to its original shape could not be seen.

But what was even worse was that the cup's yellow light had grown far duller. It seemed that the large bald man could break through the cup at any moment.

Han Li was overwhelmed with shock!

Although he didn't know why this inconceivable scene occurred, it was obvious that this Heaven Shrouding Cup couldn't contain him. His only choice at the moment was to take other actions.

With this thought, Han Li retrieved the many magic tools that were orbiting above him and took out seven to eight puppet beasts. He had the four puppets he had originally taken out form a line in front of Han Li and the four friends, creating a barrier.

Just as this was accomplished, the sound of a huge explosion could be heard as the "Heaven Shrouding Cup" magic tool shattered into multiple pieces. Then, an inhuman monster flew out from its remains.

"What is that?"

When the middle-aged woman saw this, she involuntarily cried out. The complexions of the three at her side also turned green

with disbelief.

Even Han Li was astonished at what he saw.

The large bald man who had leap out completely resembled a demon in both appearance and physique.

His height was now over six meters. His teeth were sharp and wild. Two black horns protruded from his head. A long, scaled iron tail dragged behind him. But what was most astonishing were the black and red demonic patterns covering his entire body. A majority of his bare body had been concealed by an unspeakable fiendish Qi.

The large bald man's original appearance could be faintly made out from his face, but his eyes were glowing with a green ominous light, completely filled with the desire for blood and slaughter. The slightest of humanity no longer remained. He looked toward Han Li and the others with an ice-cold glance and crouched down, like a drawn arrow ready to be shot.

When the Four Friends of Meng Mountain saw this, they dreaded disaster. But just as they were at a loss as to what to do, they suddenly heard Han Li's voice.

“Release your magic tools!”

Following Han Li's command, over ten puppets in front of them simultaneously opened their mouths and shot out over ten beams

of light, striking the transformed demon like lightning. The unguarded opponent was sent tumbling to the ground.

Seeing this, the Four Friends of Meng Mountain couldn't help but be greatly joyous and impulsively released their magic tools, attacking the large man from every direction. They wished to quickly dispatch of this frightening monster.

Unfortunately, their beautiful dream only lasted for a fleeting moment before a stream of fiendish Qi shot toward the sky from the large man as he furiously jumped up. Regardless of what magic tool was attacking him, there wasn't the slightest of injury. This caused the four friends' eyes open wide from shock.

The transformed demon madly roared to the sky and suddenly started to wildly flourish his arms like windmills, striking at the magic tools that surrounded him. In an instant, his incredibly sharp fingers thoroughly sliced them to bits and turned them into scrap metal fragments.

Without waiting for the four friends to recover from their shock, the transformed demon's eyes glowed with jade light and his body shook several times, appearing in front the barrier protecting Han Li and the others. It extended its claws and fiercely swung.

Crash.

The dark-faced old man quickly acted and activated the shield blocking the attack just in time. However, five deep claw marks remained on the shield. Furthermore, the old man's complexion

turned extremely pale in an instant; it was obvious his magic power was not enough to maintain the shield against the onslaught.

Seeing this, the large man laughed evilly and used his other claw to strike the shield at the speed of lightning.

However, his expression immediately changed. He abruptly withdrew his claw and pulled back his arms, forming a cross in front of his body.

At this moment, the second wave of light beams came from his front, harshly striking him once more.

However, this time the transformed demon wasn't knocked down by the attack. He was only forcibly pushed back by the wave of attacks by about a hundred meters. This caused dark-faced old man, who received the first claw attack, to finally let out a long breath. He wiped the cold sweat from his forehead and nervously said to the other three, "His attacks are too ferocious. A single person's magic power won't last against his strikes. Everyone, gather your strength to power the shield!"

Hearing the words of their eldest brother, the remaining three friends reached out without hesitation and placed their hands on the old man's shoulders, frenziedly pouring spiritual power into his body.

In an instant, color returned to dark-faced old man's complexion.

The second attack had no effect on the man transformed into a demon, which appeared to become even more violent. As soon as the puppet beasts' light beams faded away, it immediately charged forward again, brandishing its fangs and claws. But as it was about to strike the white scale shield, another wave of light beams struck it back to its original location.

Seeing this, Han Li tensely wrinkled his brow.

Since this monster was able break through the "Heaven Shrouding Cup" and its body could resist the puppet beasts' light beam attacks, it was clear that common top-grade magic tools wouldn't have any effects. Only treasure talismans would do any damage.

With this thought, Han Li didn't hesitate any further and commanded the Four Friends of Meng Mountain, "Keep it busy with the puppet beasts. I need some time to cast my magic!"

With that said, Han Li did not wait for their response. He took out the azure mist talisman from his storage pouch and solemnly sat down with his eyes closed, the talisman in his hands.

Han Li didn't tell them about the matter of the treasure talisman because he understood that as loose cultivators, they most likely would not have known of such a thing. More importantly, now was not the time to explain.

His neat and incisive methods illustrated that Han Li simply did not tolerate opposition from the Four Friends of Meng Mountain.

These four friends also clearly understood this. After they mutually glanced at each other, the dark-faced old man could only gather his courage and agree.

After that, the transformed demon threw itself forward seven to eight more times in successive attacks, but each attack was met with dejected failure.

Although that white scale shield was riddled with traces of damage from the opponent's claws, under the control of the four friends, it was able to obstruct his incisive jade-shattering claws. They were even able to repel it a certain distance away with the additional aid of the puppet beasts' light beam attacks. Without an immediate succession of attacks from the transformed demon, the four friends were able to somewhat catch their breath.

Chapter 310: Royal Family

Relying on his mid Foundation Establishment cultivation, Han Li was able to activate the treasure talisman several times faster than when he was a Qi Condensation cultivator.

After a short moment, the azure talisman in his hand turned into a several inch long azure jade rod that sparkled exquisitely and flowed with glimmering light.

At this moment, the combined magic power of the Four Friends of Meng Mountain had reached its limit. The aggressive swipes of the man transformed into a demon were like repeated hammer strikes against the white scale shield, leaving the four friends exhausted with pale gray complexions.

“Senior, hurry!”

The dark-faced old man saw Han Li’s talisman transform and couldn’t help but anxiously urge him.

Han Li did not have the time to pay attention to the old man. Instead, after he saw the transformed demon repelled by the light beam attacks, he immediately poured all of the spiritual power in his body into the jade rod.

In an instant, the small jade rod floating above his hand released a dazzling blue radiance. It split in two, then two to four and four to eight... In the blink of an eye, it transformed into several hundreds of similar small rods. Each rod released a rumbling hum

and continuously trembled as they revolved around Han Li.

This astonishing scene rendered the Four Friends of Meng Mountain speechless. They believed it to be an illusion, not daring to trust what they saw with their own eyes.

Without the slightest of delay, Han Li pointed at the transformed demon with a solemn expression. Then, like a bursting dam, the densely packed small rods immediately shot forth in a fierce, grand charge.

Although the mind of the former large bald man wasn't clear, as he faced the assault of Han Li's treasure talisman, he seemed to realize the situation was far from good. Dread appeared on his face. With a flash of red light, he madly galloped away like a shooting star at a speed no slower than the Divine Wind Boat.

This scene left Han Li stunned and hesitant. The other party had already run over three hundred meters away. Han Li could only see the distant fleeing figure from behind.

With a sigh, Han Li didn't give chase. Instead, he lightly waved his hand, causing the jade rod talisman treasure to withdraw and converge into an azure talisman, floating back to his hand.

It wasn't as if he didn't want to prevent future problems. However, the remaining uses of the jade rod talisman treasures were limited. If he were to pursue and tangle with him for a long period of time, Han Li didn't know if the treasure talisman would last. Also, with living mouths already in hand, this choice was

comparatively more reliable.

Seeing such a formidable opponent flee from Han Li, the hearts of the four friends shook as they stood, propping each other up.

Seeing that their complexions truly weren't good, after a moment of thought, Han Li took out a small medicine bottle from his storage pouch and handed it over to them.

"Everyone take one pill. It will help with your injuries," Han Li said with a slight smile.

Regardless of how it was presented, these people had been quite helpful in today's battle. He naturally had to show this to some extent in order to have them know that he wasn't unkind.

As expected, the four friends revealed a grateful appearance. The old man then respectfully took the bottle and lightly poured four fire-red longan sized medicinal pills into his hand. Upon smelling its medicinal fragrance, his spirit felt roused.

As the old man was someone with much experience, he was immediately pleasantly surprised by the great value of the medicine. After he repeatedly expressed his thanks toward Han Li, he took the medicine pill along with the others.

Just as the medicine pills entered their stomachs, they immediately scattered, warmly flowing into every inch of their bodies. This caused their injuries to feel much lighter, and they felt

great joy.

“Let’s leave! It will be troublesome if we stay here for long and the Black Fiend School brings reinforcements,” Han Li said with a deep voice as he took a look at the captured young prince and Steward Wang.

The four friends naturally didn’t have any objections. They obediently carried the two captives onto the Divine Wind Boat. Han Li then hastily flew with all of them on board.

The sky above the ruined temple regained peace once more. No one who looked could tell that a fierce battle between cultivators had occurred here.

.....

Han Li and company returned to the Qin Residence without a problem and directly descended to their dwelling.

Fearing that any delay would bring trouble, Han Li made a change of plan and started to interrogate the young prince and the steward that very night.

Han Li planned to personally interrogate the young prince and hand Chief Steward Wang to the four friends. He was convinced that with the dark-faced old man’s shrewd ruthlessness, he should receive a satisfactory result.

To make cultivators tell the truth was a comparatively more difficult matter for others. However, Han Li, who had a rough understanding of bewitchment techniques and was proficient in the Dao of medicine, simply had no problem in this regard. This was especially apparent with such a large difference in cultivation.

Although the young prince had started by absolutely refusing to open his mouth, completely unwilling to answer Han Li's mild questioning, Han Li force fed the young prince a medicinal liquid with no trace of politeness. As a result, the prince grew dizzy, and his mind sank into delusion.

Soon after, Han Li used a common bewitchment magic technique, "Hypnotic Eye", and smoothly took control of his mind. Afterwards, the prince obediently answered Han Li's questions like a puppet.

Hearing the young prince's account, Han Li's appearance changed without end. At the start, he was solemnly ice-cold. In the middle, he was stunned and amazed. By the end, he appeared conflicted and gloomy.

With the young prince divulging all his hidden secrets, Han Li muttered to himself for a moment. Then he took out a black medicinal pill he had prepared beforehand and expressionlessly stuffed it down the young prince's throat before walking out of his room, not even giving the young prince another glance.

This "Soul Breaking Pill" was enough to silently kill the young prince.

Although Han Li didn't feel very good about using poison to kill a defenseless person, in light of the young prince using over ten cultivators as blood sacrifices to cultivate a demonic art, his death couldn't be regarded as unjust.

When he arrived at the Clear Sound Courtyard, the Four Friends of Meng Mountain were discussing the interrogation with solemn expressions. Once they saw Han Li enter, they all stood and welcomed Han Li to the head seat.

Han Li sat down without declining and asked, "So how about it? Did Steward Wang confess to anything?"

The four friends exchanged mutual glances. As the eldest member, the dark-faced old man stood and replied, "Senior might already know this...I'm afraid the situation is quite complicated, especially if Steward Wang didn't lie."

With that said, the old man stole a look at Han Li. However, Han Li's expression was normal and didn't express anything.

With no better option, the old man deliberated for a moment and forced himself to say, "This one has learned much information with regards to the Black Fiend School from Steward Wang. However, most of it is insignificant. Only one extremely jeopardizing matter is important. That is, the Black Fiend School Master is hiding in the Imperial City. Furthermore, the current mortal emperor of the State of Yue has long since become his puppet, turning the Imperial Palace into the Black Fiend School's

nest. As it happens to be, the Black Fiend School Master is a man called Li Poyun, a eunuch among the stewards within Imperial Palace. It is said that he is in the middle of secluded cultivation.”

When the dark-faced old man said this, he wrinkled his brow. He felt this matter wasn't easy to handle! After all, even if cultivators held mortals in contempt, they still had to be somewhat wary toward the highest ruler of the mortal world!

After Han Li heard this, his face didn't change. However, his heart sighed incessantly!

He didn't have hold any fear for the emperor but he knew that the current royal family of the State of Yue was actually in joint cooperation with the Seven Sects.

Each of the sects had an unwritten rule strictly prohibiting even a half step of entry into the forbidden city. This was to avoid any sect from seizing the royal family by force and leaving the other sects at a disadvantage.

Thus, for several hundred years, the slightest trace of Seven Sect Disciples had not appeared in the Imperial City of Yue. So long as the State of Yue's emperor didn't make any great blunders by not making any offerings to the Seven Sects, the Seven Sects left them completely alone. Perhaps it was this that gave the Black Fiend School an advantageous opportunity.

Han Li had already contemplated the young prince's answers many times over, but he was still unsure as to what to do!

This rule had been maintained for such a long time. Even if he uncovered the true identity of the Black Fiend School Master, who knew if that would atone for his crime of trespassing into the Imperial City? Not only was it possible that he could receive no merits, but he could also be severely punished!

Being unable to distinguish between what a right or wrong course of action, he grew extremely annoyed. In the long history of the Seven Great Sects, such occurrences had happened before.

There were times when the authority of some rules was far more important than the rightness or wrongness of the matter and simply couldn't be broken in the slightest, causing Han Li to feel greatly afraid of the consequences.

He wasn't someone who wished to expend effort only to receive an undesired outcome.

But returning to the main topic at hand, being able to discover the true identity of the Black Fiend School Master so easily was truly unexpected!

However, this was a just a chance coincidence. According to the young prince's knowledge, even Foundation Establishment Altar Lords hadn't seen the appearance of the school master before and didn't know of his origins.

These two were only a few individuals who knew the Black Fiend School Master's identity. This was completely because Steward

Wang and the young prince had a rather familiar relationship to the Black Fiend School Master.

One of them was the Black Fiend School's older cousin and had saved his life before. The other was his only official disciple and received no small amount of favor. With such intimate relationships, they were able to know the true identities of many important figures.

Otherwise, in such a large city such as Yuejing, how could two among many of the school's Qi Condensation disciples hold such influential positions in the school?

Chapter 311: Secrets Of Blood Sacrifice

Just as Han Li was considering this, the dark-faced old man continued without stopping, "... We were unable to discover the true circumstances of the Black Fiend School Master's cultivation. By his side, there are four great Blood Servants closely protecting him, similar to the one we encountered today. It is certain that we are not capable of being their match as we are now. Thus, I recommend Senior that we do not take the initiative to further provoke them and that it would be best to wait for reinforcements..."

"Be at ease. This Black Fiend School Master is at most a late Foundation Establishment cultivator. I'm quite certain he has yet to reach Core Formation."

Han Li, who had originally been listening from the beginning, suddenly interrupted the old man's words and said this with much certainty.

Han Li's words stunned the dark-faced old man at first, but he suddenly became happy. The others also appeared greatly relieved.

Although they didn't know why Han Li was so certain, since it was Senior Han who had said this, it was extremely unlikely he was wrong! A moment ago, they had been discussing that if their enemy happened to be a Core Formation cultivator, they would only be able to flee in humiliation! Even if with the assistance of reinforcements from the Seven Sects, it was still uncertain if the Black Fiend School Master could be dealt with.

But now that Han Li had said this, the hearts of the Four Friends of Meng Mountain naturally grew much calmer.

“Could Senior tell us a few things? When we interrogated Steward Wang, he didn’t have the slightest idea about the Black Fiend School Master’s cultivation!”

“Fourth Brother, what nonsense are you speaking? Since Senior Han has said this, it must be completely true.” The dark-faced old man fiercely rebuked the youth with a serious expression.

When Han Li heard their words, he slightly smiled and calmly said, “This isn’t some kind of secret! This information came from the fact that the school master requires Foundation Establishment cultivators to conduct blood sacrifices.”

Han Li’s relaxed voice slowly explained this.

“Although our Yellow Maple Valley isn’t very involved with Devilish Dao cultivation techniques, we do have some understanding of blood sacrifices, this impatient and destructive evil magic. This devilish art works by taking in other cultivator’s blood essence and using it to boost their own cultivation. This was once a common occurrence in previous devilish sects as it is able to greatly increase a cultivator’s magic power in a short period and skip a great amount of time spent in meditation, bitterly cultivating. As a result, there was a time in the cultivation world when not only the Devilish Dao but even Righteous Sects had many people secretly cultivation this technique.”

After Han Li said this, he coldly laughed, and a slight sneer occurred at the corner of his mouth. Then he continued, “However, this insane cultivation technique not only required the vicious and merciless slaughter of many other cultivators, but it also had a fatal flaw. It is only effective at the level of Foundation Establishment and below. In addition, those who use blood sacrifices are doomed to stay at Foundation Establishment for the rest of their lives without any hope of reaching Core Formation. During that time when so many cultivators secretly cultivated this devilish art, not a single one of them was able to reach Core Formation.

“What’s worse is that as they consumed the blood sacrifice’s magic power, they would often experience backlash. If one was not careful, he or she would encounter [Qigong Deviation](#) and die. Obviously, the main reason as to why this cultivation technique disappeared without a trace was because it became taboo amongst all cultivators to consume another’s blood essence. Thus, both the Righteous and the Devil Dao gradually eradicated those who practiced this devilish art.

“However, it was later said that the Devilish Dao had hated to part with this method of hurriedly increasing their cultivation and instead created a cultivation technique that was also known as blood sacrifice. However, this method didn’t directly consume another’s blood essence. Instead, it would use a cultivator’s soul. Although I’ve heard the rise in cultivation wasn’t as sudden or quick as the original blood sacrifice, it shared the same restrictions, preventing Core Formation and containing the same danger of backlash. It was aptly named soul sacrifice. With regards to soul sacrifice, my sect’s ancient records didn’t mention much of it. I only know that once it was established, it was only grasped by a few higher echelon experts of the Devil Dao and wasn’t widely

circulated, preventing a massacre in the cultivation world! Furthermore, there are also many other restrictions in other areas.”

In a single breath, Han Li had spoken of many secrets with regards to blood sacrifice. As rogue cultivators, this greatly widened the perspective of the Four Friends of Meng Mountain. At the same time, they also knew why Han Li was certain that the Black Fiend School Master was only at Foundation Establishment. It was very obvious that that Black Fiend School used the first method of blood sacrifice.

“We have already acquired a rough understanding of the internal circumstances of the Black Fiend School. However, that large bald man escaped, so by now, the Black Fiend School should know of our circumstances as well. They might immediately abandon their nest and flee. As such, if they’ve hidden themselves again, we would be at a disadvantage.” The second brother suddenly thought of something and voiced his concern with worry.

“Impossible! It is currently unlikely for the Black Fiend School to immediately flee. From what I learned from the young prince, the Black Fiend School Master is currently in a crucial point in secluded cultivation at some cave within the Imperial Palace. I’ve heard that the School Master had prepared this secluded cultivation for several years and absolutely wouldn’t give it up halfway through. It’s most likely that they are gathering their forces and guarding against us.” Han Li’s tone of words held ridicule toward the Black Fiend School.

Hearing these words, the four friends’ spirits were roused, and

they revealed slight excitement.

“Senior, then next we must...” After the dark-faced old man calmed down, he probingly asked this.

“We don’t have to do anything next except calmly wait for reinforcements! Although the other party knows of our circumstances, they don’t know where we are hiding. Furthermore, the people taking care of their business in Yuejing are none other than the two captives in our hands. If the Black Fiend School wanted to go find us, they wouldn’t be able to send any capable men. However, everyone must be a bit careful. In the coming days, stay and properly cultivate within the residence. When reinforcements come, we will then make our decision.” Han Li massaged his nose with his hand as he said this with the corner of his mouth slightly raised. His eyes had already become narrow slits.

With a mysterious smile on his face, Han Li caused the others to feel greatly perplexed.

.....

The Imperial City of the State of Yue occupied one-fifths of its land. However, a third of the Imperial City was occupied by the glorious and magnificent Imperial Palace.

Layers of perfectly cut jade bricks formed the palace floors along with countless elegant corridors in addition to many decorative gardens with rarely seen flowers and plants/ Even eunuchs and

palace maids who had lived in the palace for years would often lose their way, a testament to how extensive the Imperial Palace was!

It was currently almost midnight. The original bustling of court eunuchs and palace maids had long exchanged for a heavy guard with sentries posted every few meters.

But under these circumstances, there was still a person whose entire body was tightly covered in a wide cloak swaggering through the layers of sentries with a gold medallion in hand, walking toward the depths of the cold palace hall.

This person was extremely tall!

Looking at the sinister palace gate, the mysterious man suddenly shed off his cloak and exposed his massive bald head. This was precisely the large bald man who had escaped from Han Li.

At this moment, he no longer had his demonic appearance and seemed quite normal. However, his face was pale and seemed lacking in blood; it appeared his origin Qi had been greatly depleted.

“Who is it?”

Just as the large bald man walked two steps forward, an extremely cold voice came from within the palace hall.

“Ice demon, it’s me.”

The large bald man replied without a trace of politeness. He walked through the gate without stopping.

“So it was Tie Luo! You came back from your mission! But wait, why are your footsteps so weak and your Qi so lacking? Could it be that you, who claims to be seldom harmed by magic tools and impenetrable to ice and fire, suffered quite a bit?” the ice-cold voice asked with some shock. But soon after, the speaker took joy in the bald man’s misfortune.

“Humph, what does an ice-cold fellow like you know? The person I encountered this time was a formidable fellow. Let alone me, even if us two worked together, I fear we wouldn’t be good enough! Were it not for the quick-witted fiend demon transformation I planned advance, I fear I would have lost my life there,” The large bald man replied with a cold smile.

“You used the fiend demon transformation? No wonder your origin Qi had been injured. It seems that without a month of bitter cultivation, you won’t have any hope of recovering! However, being able to pressure you like this, your opponent must truly be exceptional. Tell me about him!” This ice demon held great curiosity in his words.

“After I first beg the school master for forgiveness, I will return and tell you this in detail! The school master’s in-name disciple was captured by the enemy, so right now I don’t have time to deal with you. I don’t know what punishment I’ll receive for this blunder!” The large bald man impatiently answered.

“Old Tie, you might not know, but unlike the others. It’s as if we are all of one heart with the school master. How could the school master punish you? At most, he would rebuke you!” The ice demon replied with objection.

But these words soon lagged behind as the originally shut palace hall doors opened by themselves with a creak. An incomparably dark gateway was revealed, similar to that of a demonic beast opening its mouth to devour its chosen prey.

When the large bald man saw this, he couldn’t help but walk forward hesitantly.

“Qing Wen and Ye She?”

When the large bald man walked forward through the doors, he immediately asked the white silhouette to the side.

“They went to the blood prison to cultivate! For the time being, only I remained to take care of things.” The image of the white silhouette erratically swayed in the shadows. His body was emitting faint white Qi from all over, preventing the bald man from seeing his true appearance.

“Humph! That Qing Wen is already at mid Foundation Establishment but still he cultivates so diligently. Could it be he isn’t afraid of true essence backlash? And that brat Ye She, when has he ever been so hardworking?” The large bald man revealed an expression of astonishment and asked this, puzzled.

“When you hear this, don’t be envious! That Ye She said he felt that he was about to enter mid Foundation Establishment. Who gave this guy such good aptitude? He can still keep up with us even without cultivating. What can be done!” Although the ice demon advised the large man to not be jealous, his own words were filled with a sour tone.

Chapter 312 : Reinforcements And Peace

“Ice demon, it isn’t that you find this guy displeasing to the eye but rather that you want me to pick a fight with Ye She!” the large bald man coldly grumbled, glaring at the ice demon.

“Heehee! That could be true! Regardless, don’t you want to go see the school master? It would be best to go now. The school master has yet to start refining Qi from his latest blood sacrifice!” The white silhouette addressed the worry on the large man’s mind, changing the subject without care.

The large bald man clearly understood that the other party’s words were a slight towards him, but he simply snorted and walked into the darkness with large strides.

After turning several corners and walking through six or seven courtyards, the large man arrived at an extremely remote and expansive rock garden. An expression of reverence had appeared on his face.

“Subordinate Tie pays respects to School Master!” the large man loudly greeted with a bow.

“So it’s Tie Luo! How were you wounded?”

A middle-aged man’s magnetic distant voice came from the rock garden where the Black Fiend School Master had secluded himself. It was likely that this was completely unthinkable to Han Li and the others.

“Many thanks for School Master’s concern, but this subordinate simply used the demon transformation technique. There is only a bit of damage to my vitality” When the large bald man heard the school master’s words, he gave a careful reply.

For a moment, the school master didn’t immediately give a reply. After a long while, he faintly said, “From what I can see, this mission was a failure! Otherwise, my in-name disciple should have followed you back for the mission debriefing.”

“Please forgive me, School Master. This subordinate didn’t do his best to protect the young master and Protector Wang, both of whom fell into the enemy’s hands. This subordinate willingly receives the School Master’s strict punishment!” The large man grit his teeth and said this with an appearance of shame.

“Punishment? Why would I punish you? Since you’ve already used the demon transformation technique, it clearly shows that this enemy was truly too strong. It wasn’t because you didn’t try your best. Besides, they were only a disciple and a protector, so losing them isn’t anything too terrible. If you, on the other hand, were to fall into the enemy’s hands, then I truly would have a headache!”

“Many thanks for School Master’s forgiveness. This subordinate will certainly do his utmost for School Master in order to make up for this failure!”

The Black Fiend School Master had skillfully won over his

subordinate's heart, stirring up emotions from the large bald man with his words. In response, the bald man immediately made a great display of loyalty.

“En, very good! But before anything else, tell me about the fight that occurred. I want to know which sect this cultivator came from and how shockingly ruthless he was!” The Black Fiend School Master was clearly very satisfied with the large man's words, but he still asked about Han Li with great curiosity.

“As you bid!” The large man hastily agreed.

“The techniques of the Foundation Establishment cultivator who we wanted to capture were extremely peculiar. He was unexpectedly able to control mechanical beast-like figurines. Furthermore, his strength was not lacking. At the time....” The large bald man thoroughly narrated the events of his fight with Han Li and how he used the demonic transformation technique when the situation turned sour.

After the large man finished, the rock garden was quiet for a moment. The Black Fiend School Master seemed to be thinking of something.

After a while, a clear and cold voice spoke.

“Based on the description of this cultivator's control of figurines, this should be the puppet technique of the Thousand Bamboo School and is thus a cultivator from this school. I heard earlier that a few Thousand Bamboo School cultivators had appeared within

the borders of Yuan Wu. He is probably one of them. However, your intuition to immediately free after your demon transformation was a very wise decision. Otherwise, you wouldn't be speaking here with me now," the Black Fiend School Master indifferently said.

"That can't be! Although I am not confident that my transformed demonic body would be able to truly withstand his treasure talisman, were it not for the fact that I was unable to control my own body after the demonic transformation, I would have actually wanted to fight him! Even if I wasn't his opponent, I would've completely been able to flee without harm," the large man replied with some refusal.

"Tie Luo, I know that you were able withstand a treasure talisman one time before and came out unscathed. However, talisman treasures greatly differ in power from one another. Even if two treasure talismans were refined from the same magic treasure, their strength wouldn't be the same. Also, with this treasure talisman's strange appearance, I can conclude that you wouldn't be able to endure the opponent's attacks even with your current fiend demon transformation,. If it were Qing Wen's wood devil transformation, there might have been some chance of victory." The Black Fiend Sect Master smiled warmly and gave the large man an explanation.

"Many thanks for School Master's pointers!" Still somewhat unconvinced, the large man still expressed his thanks with acknowledgement.

"School Master, how should we respond to this cultivator? Since

the opponent isn't a cultivator from the Seven Sects, should us four blood servants be dispatched to capture him alive and present him for School Master's cultivation?" the large bald man eagerly asked. It was obvious he planned to find Han Li and settle the score.

"There's no need! It was only a guess that he was a Thousand Bamboo School cultivator. I'm not completely certain, and he may have other helpers. Also, I am at a crucial point of my secluded cultivation and do not wish to provoke any great enemy. Confine all the disciples within the capital in the coming days and have them all remain at the Imperial Palace. There matters will be put off until I reach great success stage in my cultivation. Even if there are no Foundation Establishment cultivators to serve as blood sacrifices, it will only delay my progress by a few months. At that time, apart from Core Formation cultivators, no Foundation Establishment cultivators will be my match." As the Black Fiend School Master said this, his originally flat tone became filled with excitement.

The Black Fiend School Master's thoughts happened to be just as Han Li had anticipated.

"This subordinate wishes good fortune for School Master's cultivation breakthrough to the great-success stage. This one will immediately arrange for the school disciples at the Imperial Palace to fortify the number of guards. We won't allow them to disturb the School Master in the slightest," the large man loudly declared with tact.

"Good, carry out the arrangements!"

After the Black Fiend School Master finished saying this, he seemed to be somewhat tired and didn't say anything further. Thus, the large bald man respectfully took several steps back, turned around, and departed.

This location once again became an unremarkable corner of the cold palace.

.....

Time passed by quickly. Half a month has passed since Han Li had passed on the newly acquired intelligence.

At this moment, the Black Fiend School and Han Li had taken the same action and withdrew.

Since the Black Fiend School didn't dispatch their troops to search wide for the hidden Han Li, Han Li didn't dare to risk condemnation and rush into the Imperial City, showing his usual calm restraint. It appeared that nothing happened to both sides during this time.

It would be reasonable to say that the Devil Dao should have already shown themselves, but no information of them had appeared, causing Han Li to let out a great sigh of relief.

Han Li's most feared scenario where the Black Fiend School and the Devil Dao would collaborate together and simultaneously stir

up vile trouble did not occur. Han Li couldn't help but secretly rejoice from this.

According to Han Li's calculations, even if Li Huayuan sent people over, they would arrive in about ten days at the earliest. Thus, he calmly cultivated everyday, not rashly going out. At Han Li's suggestion, Qin Yan had also stayed in at the Residence for the past recent days and evaded invitations to go out, claiming that he wanted to deepen and enjoy familial ties.

But on the morning of this very day, as Han Li was meditating and refining Qi on his bed, He suddenly opened his eyes, exposing a trace of cold light.

“Which fellow Daoists have come to visit? There's no need to be so secretive. Come out!”

After Han Li coldly said this, he patted his storage pouch and immediately took out the white scale shield, blocking his front. At the same time, his other hand grasped a fire cloud talisman. He appeared as if he were facing a great enemy.

What caused Han Li to act so solemnly was the feeling of shock in response to the appearance of three of four Foundation Establishment cultivators lingering outside the door. Although they used Qi concealment magic techniques, Han Li, who cultivated the nameless chant, could faintly feel their presence.

Han Li inwardly thought to himself with astonishment, ‘Could it be that the four great blood servants of the Black Fiend School

have all come?’

When this thought raced through his mind, Han Li excessively complained to himself and immediately planned his escape. As for the Four Friends of Meng Mountain and those from the Qin Residence, Han Li couldn’t do anything for them; he could only wish them good luck.

While Han Li’s mind was filled with these distracting thoughts, not a single magic tool or Daoist technique came from outside as Han Li had expected. Instead, he heard a bright and cheerful voice.

“Hehe! How about it? I said you wouldn’t be able to conceal yourselves from Junior Martial Brother! Young Junior Martial Brother has already entered mid Foundation Establishment. Don’t show off your mere skill in front of Junior Martial Brother Han.”

This was an extremely familiar voice to Han Li. His mind stirred as he loudly answered, “Could it be that Senior Martial Brother Xiong have arrived? Let Junior Martial Brother give you his greetings!”

Han Li’s words were filled with pleasant surprise!

“Junior Martial Brother, you’ve guessed correctly!” After the voice’s owner said this, he opened the door and strut into Han Li’s room; it was Han Li’s Fourth Senior Martial Brother, Song Meng.

Two men and a woman stood behind him. Apart from the serious

appearance of a young handsome man, the other two looked at Han Li with a smile.

Among them, a man with a scholarly appearance said with a smile, “Eighth Junior Martial Brother, I’ve heard your name from Master. It’s unfortunate that Seventh Junior Martial Sister and I haven’t had a chance to meet you yet! Now that we’ve finally seen you in person, we’re astounded that you’ve cultivate so quickly and reached mid Foundation establishment! I truly have no words to say.” The man clicked his tongue.

When that elegant woman standing by his side heard this, she concealed a chuckle and brightly sized up Han Li with curiosity.

Han Li took another glance at the man and woman, but he still didn’t recognize who they were. He immediately stood up from the bed and said with a respectful expression, “So it’s Third Senior Martial Brother and Seventh Senior Martial Sister! Junior Martial Brother has long heard of Senior Martial Brother and Sister’s great reputations. Unfortunately, I also haven’t had the chance to meet you. As for cultivation, Senior Martial Brother had entered mid Foundation Establishment far before me. How could this Junior Martial Brother compare?”

Han Li’s words were sincere and left a good impression on his Third Martial Brother.

Chapter 313: Decision

At this moment, Han Li turned his head toward the handsome youth and politely said, “Sixth Senior Martial Brother has also come! The affairs of this little brother have truly troubled Senior Martial Brother.”

Wu Xuan indifferently responded with “En” and said nothing more.

Han Li simply smiled, displaying nothing out of the ordinary. He clearly understood now that ever since that matter with Dong Xuan’er, this Sixth Senior Martial Brother did not find Han Li pleasant to the eye.

However, Han Li himself didn’t really mind much. After all, this person was much easier to deal with than hypocrites and other such vile characters.

Right now, however, Wu Xuan was looking at Han Li with a trace of amazement.

Last time they had seen each other, Han Li was only at early Foundation Establishment. But now, after just a short period of time, Han Li had already entered mid Foundation Establishment. How could Wu Xuan, who was still lingering at early Foundation Establishment, not feel greatly astonished and envious?

“Senior Martial Brothers, please come in! I’ll go ahead and steep a pot of good tea for you!” Han Li invited the four into the room

with a smile and then turned around and went inside ahead of the others.

“There is no rush to drink tea. Let’s first talk about the Black Fiend School’s experts. I’ve always wanted to have a few truly great battles with Foundation Establishment cultivators. Unfortunately, when I was at Master’s side, the old man didn’t allow me or Eighth Junior Martial Brother to freely kill Devil Dao cultivators. Otherwise, I would possibly be in the same boat as Junior Brother Han and be dispatched to the border to engage in mutual combat.” When Song Meng and the others entered the room and sat down, he hastily asked this with itching impatience and curiosity.

This Fourth Senior Martial Brother normally treated people extremely coldly. But now that fierce close combat was imminent, he immediately acted like any other person, becoming excited and unafraid.

“Nonsense! I’ve heard that success in frontline battles doesn’t rely solely on how many enemies you’ve killed before. What’s most important is one’s own cultivation. Because Junior Martial Brother Han had bitterly cultivated beyond everyone else with great success, he was able to naturally succeed in this area.” When the Third Senior Martial Brother Liu Jing heard Song Meng’s words, he couldn’t help but tighten his face and say this with a somewhat rebuking tone.

Hearing this, Han Li felt greatly surprised.

He hadn’t thought that these three Senior Martial Brothers

would speak mercilessly. He believed that with Song Meng's temperament, he wouldn't be immediately rebuked.

This left Han Li dumbstruck. Song Meng only chuckled and then remained silent.

While Han Li was left in shock, the three Senior Martial Brothers had suddenly turned their heads to him and amiably said, "Master already gave us a rough explanation, but in these passing days, I'm sure that new information has surfaced. I hope Han Li could give us a detailed briefing."

"Yes! I am also very curious. Who's part of this evil school that dares to abduct so many cultivators? They truly have great courage!"

Seventh Martial Sister Zhong Weiniang didn't appear to be much older than Han Li. She had a round face with great clear white skin, and her smile had two shallow dimples; she was truly adorable.

However, Han Li clearly understood that this Senior Martial Sister Zhong was a genuine genius cultivator. He had heard that by the age of sixteen, she had already entered Foundation Establishment. She was now only one step away from mid Foundation Establishment and received much favor from Li Huayuan and his wife.

With that thought, Han Li sighed and slowly said, "Senior Martial Sister Zhong probably already knows that the majority of

the cultivators abducted by the Black Fiend School were used as blood sacrifices for cultivation. A small number of them were spared, threatened into becoming their wretched followers. As a group of evil cultivators unfit to be seen under sunlight, they would naturally have great courage. Furthermore, after so many years of development, they now have quite a few Foundation Establishment experts, each of them extremely vicious.”

“Blood sacrifice! That evil cultivation art that raises one’s cultivation by absorbing the blood essence of other cultivators?” When Wu Xuan heard this, his face hardened, asking this with a trembling voice.

Song Meng and the others also displayed similar shock.

“Eighth Junior Martial Brother, are you not mistaken? Is it truly that bloody cultivation art?” Liu Jing’s scholarly face had a menacing air and a faint, ominous glint could be seen from his eyes.

When Han Li saw this, his heart trembled.

He had heard long ago that although this Third Senior Martial Brother did not have the greatest cultivation among Li Huayuan’s disciples, he was famed among the junior generation of the Seven Sects for his bloody, obsessive hatred of evil and have slain countless degenerate cultivators by his hand. This was the main reason why [martial idiots](#) like Song Meng held such reverence toward Third Senior Martial Brother Liu Jing.

(TL: Martial Idiot 武痴: obsessed with combat and fighting but

not much else.)

“That’s correct. They have cultivated like this for many years.” Han Li naturally didn’t conceal anything about the Black Fiend School and nodded his head with certainty.

“Junior Martial Brother Han, tell us everything that happened,” Senior Martial Brother Liu solemnly said to Han Li.

“The circumstances are as such: I had originally gone to attend a banquet at Prince Xin’s residence with the Qin Clan Lord...”

Han Li slowly narrated through the events that occurred since that day at Prince Xin’s Residence. Naturally, secret details involving himself were excluded.

However, Han Li did not expect that these three Senior Martial Brothers were not easily deceived. They interrupted Han Li several times and carefully inquired about a few unclear details. Since the slightest mistake would cause Han Li to reveal everything, these questions truly caused sweat to flow down Han Li’s back several times.

This was the first time Han Li felt that weaving lies was truly difficult.

After he answered all of Liu Jing’s questions, the other three’s complexions greatly changed.

This small Black Fiend School actually had four Foundation Establishment Blood Servants, not to mention several Altar Masters with similar cultivation bases and that profound school master.

Furthermore, what was more troublesome was that their nest was actually Yuejing's forbidden city!

“Senior Martial Brother Liu, should we ask Master for instructions and ask the sect for more men? With just us, I fear it will be extremely difficult to capture the Black Fiend Sect's school master,” Wu Xuan said with hesitation.

It was obvious that he didn't want to violate the Seven Sects' entry ban and that he wasn't entirely confident in his own strength.

“What? It seems Sixth Junior Martial Brother somewhat cowardly?” When Liu Jing heard Wu Xuan's words, he raised his sharp eyebrows and spat this out with annoyance.

“Of course not. I only feel that acting as such is a bit unreliable. According to Junior Martial Brother Han's words, they won't be able to run for quite some time. As such, asking for Master's opinion seems more appropriate.” Wu Xuan hastily disputed, naturally unwilling to admit this.

“Oh! That's good. This elder brother was just suspicious! However, Junior Martial Brother Wu doesn't need to ask such a worrisome question. When we arrived, Master repeatedly warned

us that if we encountered any difficulties, we should ask for assistance from Martial Senior Hui Ming's disciples, who were sent to the nearby South Crow City for sect affairs. With Master's and Martial Senior Hui Ming's friendly relationship, they will be certain to help us."

"Humph. Since we already know the Imperial Palace has already become a den of evil, how could I, Liu, turn a blind eye to them? Don't hesitate to follow me in. As for whether our charge into the Imperial Palace will violate the Seven Sects' prohibition, I, Liu Jing, will bear all the responsibility!" Liu Jing declared with an ice-cold expression.

Everyone at the scene looked at each other in dismay except for Seventh Senior Martial Sister Zhong Weiniang, who looked at him with enchanted eyes. It was obvious she had long fallen for this Third Senior Martial Brother!

"Good. Since Third Martial Brother has said this, then Junior Martial Brother naturally won't miss such a good show as this and will fight alongside Senior Martial Brother." Song Meng became excited by Senior Martial Brother Liu's words and heroically said this.

"I also won't leave Senior Martial Brother! I will certainly charge together with him into the Imperial City!" Zhong Weiniang repeatedly agreed, having come to her senses.

When Liu Jing heard these two speak, his face smiled, expressing his gratitude. Then he turned his head toward Han Li and Wu Xuan and asked, "I don't know what you Junior Martial Brothers

intend to do. If you feel that Senior Martial Brother's methods are inappropriate and do not wish to participate in this battle, this Senior Martial Brother will absolutely not force you!"

When he said this, Han Li hesitated, pondering about the advantages and disadvantages. Wu Xuan, on the other hand, clenched his teeth. After his face changed between red and white several times, he said, "Unless Master permits it with his very own mouth, I will not deliberately violate the prohibition. If Senior Martial Brother truly wishes to personally charge into the Imperial Palace, I will not take part in it. I must first ask Master for instructions!"

His reasons were completely justifiable!

"You what..." Hearing these words, Zhong Weiniang stood up with fury filling her chest. She wanted to say something but was stopped by Liu Jing.

"Sixth Junior Martial Brother's words are reasonable. To charge together with me into the Forbidden City is a strenuous and unrewarding task. We might also incur further blame after we withdraw!" Third Senior Martial Brother calmly commented.

"What does Junior Martial Brother Han think? Could it be you are also going to mimic this fellow's example? You are a mid Foundation Establishment cultivator. Surely you aren't so cowardly!" In order to give her beloved a helping hand, Zhong Weiniang did not hesitate to use such shallow provocations. When Han Li heard this, he inwardly rolled his eyes!

Han Li didn't immediately respond and instead lowered his head in thought, muttering to himself for a moment.

This Senior Martial Brother Lu was very considerate and did not rush Han Li. Instead, he calmly sat down and waited for Han Li's decision.

"Alright, I will go! I was the one who originally raised this matter, so it would be inexcusable if I didn't go. Furthermore, I truly wish to experience the might of this mysterious Black Fiend School Master!" After a long while, Han Li lifted his head and suddenly smiled, saying this with a soft voice.

Chapter 314: Meeting Together

When Han Li said this, Zhong Weiniang beamed with joy and couldn't help but praise Han Li. Liu Jing also revealed a grateful expression.

As for Song Meng, he stepped forward and firmly patted Han Li on the shoulder two times. With a large smile, he said, "If I hadn't already met you and you were actually unwilling to go, I certainly would have had a falling out with you. However, I already know Junior Martial Brother is a valiant figure!"

With that said, Song Meng glared coldly at Wu Xuan. It seemed that Wu Xuan truly did not have a good relationship with his fellow martial brothers!

When Wu Xuan saw this, he snorted and said, "Since it is like this, I will find a peaceful place and won't disturb your grand event. I will tell Master everything that happened and hope that he doesn't blame you!" Having said this, Wu Xuan expressionlessly walked out of the room and left the Qin Residence on his flying magic tool.

"Sixth Senior Martial Brother is truly outrageous. He actually ran away as soon as a battle approached. It's unfortunate that he is my Senior Martial Brother!" Zhong Weiniang grumbled with great dissatisfaction.

"Enough. Everyone have their own ambitions, so don't force him! We must make our plans and arrangements as soon as

possible. The faster we move, the safer we will be. After all, who knows if the Black Fiend School Master is able to leave seclusion earlier than we originally thought,” Liu Jing solemnly added.

“Senior Martial Brother has much experience in exterminating degenerate cultivators. You plan it! We will act as you say. In any case, when the time comes, I am fine so long as I take part in the fighting!” Song Meng exclaimed with an excited appearance.

“Junior Martial Brother Song, you—!”

Liu Jing was rendered speechless by Song Meng’s complete lack of plans and was left not knowing whether to laugh or to cry.

Zhong Weiniang’s eyes became crescent moons as she smiled sweetly.

Han Li also faintly smiled and did not speak.

“Seventh Junior Martial Sister, you are quite familiar with Martial Senior Huiming’s disciple, Junior Martial Sister Chen. As such, it would be better if you were the one to go. Right now, she is at South Crow City. Please go and request their assistance!” After Liu Jing regained his composure, he calmly asked this of Zhong Weiniang.

“Junior Martial Sister Chen is also here? I haven’t seen her for some time. However, we have quite a good relationship. There should be no question about her assistance,” Zhong Weiniang

replied with complete confidence.

When Han Li heard the words “Junior Martial Sister Chen”, his heart shook. He thought to himself in confusion, ‘What a coincidence! Is it really her?’

While Han Li was in doubt, he heard Liu Jing say something to him.

“Junior Martial Brother Han, I fear we will have to stay at the Qin Residence for a while longer. We will require you to contact the members of the Qin Residence and arrange a quiet residence for us, allowing for peaceful cultivation.” The Third Senior Martial Brother spoke calmly.

Han Li naturally agreed.

“Then what should I do?” Song Meng couldn’t help but impatiently ask.

“You will remain here and properly take care of the Qin Residence in case the Black Fiend School suddenly launches an attack. I will go to the streets from time to time and look for any movements from the Black Fiend School. Since Junior Martial Brother Han has already revealed their faces, it’ll be harder for us to find them in public,” Liu Ming answered indifferently.

“I understand!” When he heard this, Song Meng dispiritedly agreed.

The following days were extremely peaceful.

Apart from Zhong Weiniang departing for Nanwu City to request assistance, the others generally remained at the Qin Residence and cultivated. As for Third Martial Brother Liu Jing, he went out several times in accordance with his previous words. However, he didn't acquire any useful information; it seemed as if all the Black Fiend School disciples had completely withdrawn themselves and went into hiding.

Wu Xuan was staying at an inn in Yuejing. Nobody knew what he wrote in his letter to Li Huayuan, but once he sent the letter, he casually and leisurely strolled through the bustling, lively parts of Yuejing without any thought of returning to the Qin Residence.

Nanwu City wasn't very far from Yuejing, so in less than three days, Senior Martial Sister Zhong returned with three men and two women in tow.

Among these was an exceptionally cool and elegant woman whom Han Li recognized to be "Junior Martial Sister Chen", Chen Qiaoqian. This caused Han Li's heart to be on edge.

When Chen Qiaoqian saw Han Li, she revealed slight shock, but she didn't say anything.

Even if they hadn't spoken to one another, she was unable to consider Han Li to be a stranger.

The other three men and one woman were Chen Qiaoqian's fellow apprentices. Two were at mid Foundation Establishment and two were at early Foundation Establishment. When they saw Liu Jing, they appeared very cordial. It seemed they all recognized him.

Zhong Weiniang introduced Han Li to everyone present as her newly accepted Junior Apprentice Brother. But after hearing Han Li's name, the new arrivals apart from Chen Qiaoqian revealed expressions of amazement.

"You are Junior Martial Brother Han? You truly are quite young! We've all heard of Junior Martial Brother Han's great reputation. A single person at the frontlines was able to kill over ten Foundation Establishment cultivators from the Devil Dao. Truly amazing!" Chen Qiaoqian's Senior Apprentice Sister shouted with a sweet smile.

This beautiful twenty-seven year old woman appeared to greatly admire Han Li.

When these words left her lips, Liu Jing and Zhong Weiniang were greatly shocked.

These two had been earlier dispatched on assignments and didn't participate in the second campaign between the Seven Sects and the Devil Dao. Naturally, they hadn't heard of Han Li's "great acts" in the slightest.

Now that they heard their acquaintances say this, they felt greatly shocked.

It should be known that although Third Senior Martial Brother had killed countless degenerate cultivators, he only killed two or three Foundation Establishment cultivators, each time being a bitter and long struggle for victory.

However, Han Li had unexpectedly accomplished the “great act” of killing over ten such Foundation Establishment cultivators, causing these two to feel astonished. They couldn’t help but size up this unremarkable Junior Martial Brother Han once more and feel far more respect toward him.

“Fourth Senior Martial Brother, we didn’t know about Junior Martial Brother Han’s accomplishments. Could you clearly explain why you never told me this?” After she recovered her shock, Zhong Weiniang suddenly thought of something and loudly scolded Song Meng, who was standing to the side, concealing his laughter with his sleeve. It was a rather harsh criticism!

“Junior Martial Sister, you never asked me. You only asked about Junior Martial Brother’s cultivation. I believed that Junior Martial Sister already knew about this,” Song Meng proudly huffed.

He had long since anticipated seeing the flabbergasted faces of his two fellow apprentices upon discovering this. As he expected, it was quite the view.

How could Zhong Weiniang not hear the half-heartedness

contained in those words? She gave him a fierce glance. Even though she was unwilling to let the matter drop, Liu Jing stepped in and said with a large smile, “Good! I didn’t think that Junior Marital Brother Han was so exceptional! Like this, we should be able to handle the Black Fiend School Master with greater certainty.”

When he spoke these words, his face appeared overjoyed. However, Han Li felt a chill down his back. With great apprehension, he couldn’t help but think to himself, ‘Surely this Third Senior Martial Brother doesn’t want to have me duel the Black Fiend School Master by myself?’

Han Li immediately mocked himself for thinking such a ridiculous thought and threw it to the back of his mind.

Following that, Han Li and his Senior Martial Brothers feasted with Junior Martial Sister Chen and her fellow apprentices. Although they all had similar cultivation bases and could abstain from eating for long periods of time, they were now in the mortal world. Naturally, they would enjoy their present circumstances and satisfy their desire for good food.

After they finished eating, Han Li called for Qin Residence servants to clean up the feast. The group then started to discuss how to deal with the Black Fiend School and how to charge into the Imperial City.

Liu Jing immediately made it clear that he was willing to assume complete responsibility for violating the Seven Sects’ prohibition. Thus, Junior Martial Sister Chen and the others were relieved of

their misgivings and agreed to go along with them.

Based on the intelligence Han Li acquired, apart from the four so-called Great Blood Servants, the odds of the other Altar Masters being present at the Imperial Palace were quite low since they were stationed in various parts of the State of Yue where they managed school affairs.

Thus, Liu Jing believed that with their current manpower, they were more than enough to handle the Black Fiend School, but they should nonetheless strike as soon as possible to prevent any future mishaps from emerging.

The others that heard this felt this was reasonable and proceeded to cultivate the entire following day as they were weary from travel. On the night of the second day, taking advantage of the mortals' need to sleep, they infiltrated the Imperial Palace's guards in their plan to remove evil.

At this moment, Han Li looked at everyone talking excitedly with a smile on his face, but he couldn't help but sneer in his heart.

These people truly believed the Black Fiend School was feeble and weak! How could this possibly end well!

After this great battle was concluded, it was hard to say how many of these people would still be left alive!

Were it not for the secrets he obtained from the young prince and

the usefulness it would have toward his chances of entering Core Formation in the future, he absolutely wouldn't make such a dangerous charge into the Imperial Palace. After all, he had no grudges against those who used the evil blood sacrifice technique to cultivate. All he had to do was leak information to the victims' clans and friends; in turn, they would take revenge and completely settle this matter.

As for the principles of punishing the wicked, exterminating evil, and upholding justice, Han Li had always believed that acting in accordance to one's capabilities was enough.

If there was no danger and he wouldn't have to waste too much energy, he would be happy to act. But if his opponents were too strong and they had nothing to do with him, to risk his own life to handle someone else's affairs made absolutely no sense!

Although the actions of his Sixth Senior Martial Brother Wu Xuan invited loathing from others, they weren't disagreeable. Leaving aside his methods, his decision was truly wise. Else, one may act with hot-blooded passion and recklessly brave terrible dangers.

This time, Han Li had forced himself to agree to their charge into the Black Fiend School's nest, violating his own principle of self-preservation. However, Han Li felt that this danger was worth braving.

Because Han Li's spiritual roots were truly inferior, so long as there was something he could do to increase his chances of entering Core Formation, he was unwilling to let such a boon slip

by his fingers. Furthermore, he was somewhat certain of his safe return.

This is because he had prepared a special trump card that could guarantee his own well-being. Otherwise, with Han Li's meticulous caution, how else could he possibly agree?!

Chapter 315: Preparations For The Unexpected And Suspicion

In the dead of night, Han Li quietly slipped out of his room without anyone noticing and then flew by himself in the direction of the Imperial City on his flying magic tool.

While standing on the Divine Wind Boat, Han Li looked down at a colossal pitch-black object from above, the huge entrance to the Imperial City. He faintly smiled and flew over it.

In Han Li's eyes, the Seven Sects' mandate forbidding any disciples from trespassing into the Imperial City simply didn't matter to him. He would only comply with rules that he found to be beneficial to himself; otherwise, he would be absurdly obeying empty rules that only served to stifle his actions!

He had never been someone who strictly obey the rules.

As Han Li coldly smiled, he had already flown more than three hundred meters above the Imperial Palace and was clearly violating the prohibition.

Taking advantage of the pitch-black night, Han Li silently surveyed his surroundings; his gaze sweeping across even the most desolate and unremarkable areas.

His eyes suddenly brightened, and he flew toward an imperial garden filled with azure bamboo.

Arriving above the bamboo forest, Han Li cautiously swept his gaze in every direction. Then he concealed his body's Spiritual Qi and slowly descended.

Han Li clearly understood that although the Black Fiend School controlled the Imperial Palace, they weren't able to keep an eye on every place. Furthermore, although they had many sentries, with his nameless Qi vanishing chant, he didn't have the slightest fear of any Black Fiend School members discovering him.

Besides, from what he learned from the young prince, he was very familiar with the usual arrangements of the Black Fiend School's sentries. Even if they revised the sentry placements, so long as he doesn't mindlessly rush into a heavily guarded area, Han Li was completely unworried!

This place was clearly a forgotten corner of the Imperial Palace. Not only was the Bamboo Forest filled with dried branches and rotten leaves, it also faintly released the smell of decay; the branches and leaves were left uncut, causing the forest to appear lush and thriving.

Seeing this fifth-acre sized bamboo forest, Han Li revealed a satisfied expression.

He cast incantation gestures and released a soundproofing barrier, shrouding the entire bamboo forest. Then with a solemn expression, he took out a set of formation disks and flags. This was the improved "Five Elements Reversal Formation" that Qi Yunxiao

had given him.

“Even if the Black Fiend School Master is difficult to deal with, with this Five Phases Reversal Formation, we can just take up an invincible position!” Han Li looked at the set of magic tools in his hand and muttered this to himself.

He then strode into the pitch-black forest with a resolute spirit.

Four hours later, Han Li slowly walked out with an exhausted appearance. Because time was short, he was only able to lay out a small portion of the formation, but it still should be enough. Han Li took a look in every direction, and upon seeing that there was no one there, he released the soundproofing barrier and then flew off on his Divine Wind Boat.

Han Li had been quiet and hadn't alarmed anyone from the Black Fiend School during the time he infiltrated the Imperial Palace and set up the great formation.

Although the four great Blood Servants were exceptionally vigilant due to the instructions of the Black Fiend School Master, the situation was as Han Li had predicted. They had only placed dense sentries outside of the cold palace, but the other locations were now even more lax than before. This was one of the reasons Han Li was able to leave and enter so easily.

When he flew back to the Qin Residence, the sky was still dark. Han Li chose to spend the remaining time before daybreak to mediate.

When morning came, he walked out of the room and gathered together with the others in the large hall as if nothing had happened. He chatted and joked with the others as normal. Upon discussion of the upcoming great battle, he didn't mention the "Five Elements Reversal Formation" in the slightest.

In Han Li's mind, the fewer that knew of this life preserving preparation, the better.

If he didn't end up needing to use this formation in order to achieve a decisive victory, he would be even more happy. This "Five Phases Reversal Formation" would remain as his own trump card.

Liu Ming and his fellow Yellow Maple Valley sect members naturally didn't know what Han Li was thinking. But when the topic of this night's upcoming great battle was mentioned, everyone revealed eager and excited appearances.

Apart from Liu Jing and two or three others, the rest of them had no experience fighting other Foundation Establishment cultivators. This was the main reason why Han Li didn't feel very confident about this operation.

Han Li had continuously believed that cultivators that haven't experienced their baptism of blood were certain to have a disastrous end, even when facing experienced opponents with lower cultivation. To make a mistake and lose one's life wasn't a rare occurrence. Thus, when he saw these people happily chat and

laugh, his eyes occasionally revealed a strange expression.

After all, cultivators that were able to reach Foundation Establishment were certain to have faced some hardship to reach where they were today. However after tonight's battle, these people were likely to be buried there, which was an extremely pitiful thought.

“Junior Martial Brother Han, could you accompany me for a moment?” Chen Qianqiao, who had originally been bantering with Zhong Weiniang, then looked at Han Li's face and suddenly asked him to accompany him.

Not only was Han Li amazed by these words, but even Chen Qiaoqian's fellow apprentices were silently gaping in surprise.

With a gaze of disbelief, they glanced at Han Li and their young Junior Martial Sister who had always been cold toward male cultivators.

Seeing Han Li's blank, foolish appearance, Zhong Weiniang rolled her eyes; it was unknown what she was thinking before she suddenly went to whisper a few words in Chen Qiaoqian's ear.

Suddenly, this “Junior Martial Sister Chen” blushed, and after giving Zhong Weiniang a fierce look, she walked out of the great hall in a relaxed manner. She appeared to be quietly waiting for Han Li to follow her.

“Young Junior Martial Brother, what are you spacing out for? Such a beautiful woman as Junior Martial Sister Chen is waiting for you outside so what are you hesitating for?” Liu Jing smiled as he walked over and lightly patted Han Li’s shoulder, saying this jokingly.

Han Li rubbed his nose with all his strength and wanted to bitterly laugh, but for some unknown reason, he couldn’t even smile. After dryly laughing a few times, Han Li walked out under the envious gazes of the male cultivators.

If he further hesitated, wouldn’t that appear as if he were truly lacking in confidence? He felt as if he had nothing to be afraid of.

After he walked out of the hall, Chen Qiaoqian was still lost in thought as she looked in the direction of the garden with heart-moving attractiveness. As she heard Han Li’s footsteps, without turning her head, she coldly said, “Accompany me to the garden. I wish to consult with Junior Martial Brother about a few matters.”

With that said, Chen Qiaoqian didn’t wait for Han Li’s reply. She walked on, as if she were certain Han Li would agree.

Looking at her attractive appearance from behind, Han Li unconsciously wrinkled his brow. After some thought, he silently smiled and walked after her.

To have a walk with such a delicate beauty was a truly delightful affair.

Han Li was walking several steps behind Chen Qiaoqian, admiring her graceful and ample body. He already felt that this walk was well worth it. Besides, when he thought of his encounter with this great beauty during that year, he felt something unexplainable from his heart.

“When I and Eldest Brother saw you that year, we truly believed that your esteemed self’s success during the Trial of Blood and Fire was only due to luck. I truly did not think during that year, Junior Martial Brother Han was actually an expert, disguised as a pig to eat a tiger! Not only did you deceive us two siblings, but I fear you also kept all the other experts present there in the dark.” As Han Li was letting his imagination run wild, Chen Qiaoqian indifferently said this with her back facing him.

Han Li had somewhat anticipated these words earlier and didn’t express any surprise. Instead, he scratched the back of his head and slightly smiled, saying, “Senior Martial Sister Chen is quite funny. Disguised as a pig to eat a tiger? At the time, this little brother was truly fortunate and had only passed through with luck!”

When Han Li said this, his face didn’t have the slightest hint of strangeness as if he had spoken the truth.

“Junior Martial Brother Han, you still wish to deceive me even now?” Han Li’s words seemed to anger Chen Qiaoqian. After her voice grew cold, she suddenly turned around and her bright eyes turned ice cold.

Seeing this, Han Li revealed amazement as if he had no idea as to

why she was angry.

When “Junior Martial Sister Chen” saw Han Li act this way, she grew even more angry.

“Fine. I won’t further question you about the matters of the Trial of Blood and Fire. But there is one matter that you must sincerely answer!” Although her tone grew even colder, her face wore a peculiar expression.

“What is it? Senior Martial Sister Chen, do not hesitate to ask me. This one will certainly give a sincere answer.” Han Li faintly realized something causing his heart to become restless. However on the surface he still appeared extremely honest.

“Seven to eight years ago, did you encounter anything on the east side of the Taiyue Mountain Range?” When Chen Qiaoqian asked this, her cheeks became slightly red as if she became somewhat shy as she nervously waited for Han Li’s reply.

“Seven to eight years ago...” Han Li lowered his head in contemplation, as if he were recalling something.

In truth, Han Li’s heart was pounding.

‘How after so many years, has this person still not given up her thoughts of finding me? Furthermore her expression is bashful. Could it be she has fallen in love with her savior?’ Han Li thought, feeling greatly puzzled.

This wasn't because Han Li was unromantic; rather, it was because he didn't have any intentions of having a pair cultivation partner.

Although Han Li had a somewhat ordinary interest toward Chen Qiaoqian, whenever the question of affection was raised, Han Li would automatically eliminate such thoughts without knowing why. Perhaps this was because of the affectionate scene that year between her and "Senior Martial Brother Lu" caused him to be unable to accept this woman until even now.

Chapter 316: Disappearance

“No. Seven to eight years ago, this one was helping Senior Martial Brother Ma take care of his medicine garden, but wasn’t that when the Trial of Blood and Fire take place? Why is Senior Martial Sister Chen asking this?” Han Li calmly replied after he raised his head, wearing a flawless expression of curiosity.

Chen Qiaoqian’s complexion instantly became pale, before momentarily biting her red lips and stiffly saying, “No? Yet, I remember Junior Martial Brother Han had gone out that year, and the timing matches almost perfectly!”

“Oh? That time I went out was in preparation for the Trial of Blood and Fire, buying a few magic tools and talismans. However, when I went out, I didn’t encounter anything out of the ordinary.” Han Li calmly denied.

Hearing Han Li’s words, Chen Qiaoqian remained speechless for a long while! She only coldly glanced at Han Li, as if she were truly staring into Han Li’s heart.

“Since it is like this, there is nothing to say! Junior Martial Brother, you may leave. I wish to be alone in a moment of peace.”

A trace of heartfelt disappointment appeared on Chen Qiaoqian’s face. She gently turned her face to the side and said this with a tiresome voice.

When Han Li saw this, he sighed. He knew regardless of whether

the other party trusted his words, this Senior Martial Sister Chen would no longer disturb him.

With his distant and respectful tone, this Senior Martial Sister should come to a conclusion. But with her prideful nature, she naturally wouldn't take the initiative to find him again.

“Senior Martial Sister, I will take my leave!” Han Li saluted and without the slightest hesitation, he turned around and left the garden.

When Han Li could no longer be seen, Chen Qiaoqian turned around and looked in the direction of the garden exit with a complicated gaze. She faintly whispered, “If it isn't you then who is it? During that year, the only one who went out at the same time and had strength was you, Junior Martial Brother Han!”

With that said, she gracefully walked up to blooming peony flower and nimbly picked the lovely flower with her flawless fingers; she put it up to her nose and took a soft whiff.

With the fragrant scent of the flower, Chen Qiaoqian sunk into a deep state of contemplation.

After Han Li left the flower garden, he let out a long sigh. After he shook his head, he quickly returned to the hall with hurried steps.

When the others saw Han Li's quick return, they were all a bit

startled. However, none of them were so tactless as to take the initiative to ask about the matter.

Even when a few people made some jokes about Han Li and Chen Qiaoqian, Han Li laughed it away without paying it much mind. His expression wasn't the slightest bit strange.

Not long after, Chen Qiaoqian returned and sat down next to Zhong Weiniang with her normal expression. She continued to whisper with her.

When the others saw this, they naturally found it embarrassing to further joke about the two and immediately changed the topic back to the matter of their battle with the Black Fiend School.

Time seemed to passed by quickly and the bright sky quickly darkened.

The Yellow Maple Valley cultivators had already returned to their rooms and were making preparations for their upcoming battle.

Although they each felt that their party of Foundation Establishment cultivators held a great advantage and that victory should be of no problem, each and every one of them felt very wary. After all, no one wants to carelessly throw their own life away.

However, when they thought of the many benefits they would

gain from exterminating the Black Fiend School's nest, it was hard for them not to feel excited.

After all, such opportunities to surround and annihilate Foundation Establishment cultivators without any recourse were incredibly rare. During their vicious fights with the Devil Dao cultivators, their minds would naturally be focused on the struggle of life and death instead.

This time there wouldn't only be one or two Black Fiend School Foundation Establishment cultivators. Also, they were certain to have no small amount magic tools and good materials on hand as well! In particular, receiving a share of such spoils was a large reason as to why Junior Martial Sister Chen's fellow apprentices even agreed to help.

Otherwise, who would be willing to risk their life from the mere talk of annihilating a nest of evil cultivators!

Han Li returned to his room as well, calmly inspecting the puppets he had on hand. Meanwhile, the Four Friends of Meng Mountain were standing in front of him, respectfully waiting on him as if he was their leader.

After Han Li naturally introduced them to his fellow sect members, the dark-faced old man thought to become closer to these few cultivators and see whether or not he could dredge some benefits.

However, regardless of who it was, none of them attached any

importance to this dark faced old rogue Qi Condensation cultivator. After speaking a few blunt words, these several people sent them away. This caused them to realize that not every Foundation Establishment cultivator of the Seven Great Sects were willing to associate with them. Thus, they became increasingly respectful toward Han Li.

“In this fight against the Black Fiend School, regardless of what happens, you are not required to come. It may be better for you to flee the capital during the night.” The puppet beast in Han Li’s hand flashed with white light and then he put it away in his storage back. After that he said this with an indifferent expression.

“But Senior! How could we flee from the battle!” The dark-faced old man hastily spoke on behalf of all of them.

“This isn’t a question of fleeing or not. You are all simply incapable of acting. If you were to personally join in, you would only be wasting your lives in vain. Here are some high grade magic tools. Each of you may take one. Consider them parting gifts from a senior.” After Han Li shook his head, he said this with a faint smile.

With that said, Han Li then swept his sleeve as several exquisite, glimmering magic tools appeared across the table.

It wasn’t that Han Li didn’t have a surplus of top grade magic tools on hand; after he had killed so many foundation establishment cultivators, the number of tools he had received naturally made an astonishing collection.

However, Han Li had no intention of handing them over to these people as high grade magic tools could be considered a rather good gift to rogue cultivators. He feared that taking out top grade magical tools, he would provoke their greed from them and it would be harder to satisfy them in the future.

As expected, when the Four Friends of Meng Mountain saw these magic tools, they all displayed joy as they repeatedly thanked him. They also stated that he shouldn't hesitate to find them at Meng Mountain as they would be happy to take care of any matters he had in the future.

After receiving the promise that he wanted to hear from them, Han Li gave them face by personally sending them off from Yuejing, causing them to be grateful without end.

But before they departed, the dark-faced old man suddenly pulled Han Li to the side and carefully said, "Senior, will Fifth Sister appear at the Black Fiend School? Senior doesn't need to say anything as us siblings truly understand, but I fear that Fourth Brother may have already somewhat guessed. Even though we all don't want to open that window in the slightest, Fifth Sister sank far too deeply; it would also be good if she were to never appear in front of us again!" After speaking these heavy words, the old man seemed to have released a heavy burden and respectfully bid Han Li farewell.

Han Li waited in place, watching the Four Friends of Meng Mountain gradually grow farther away as pondered about the meaning the of the dark faced old man's last words.

After a quarter hour, Han Li suddenly smiled, before flying back to the city soon after.

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After he returned to the Qin Residence, the sky had already darkened and the group from Yellow Maple Valley were all waiting in the main hall. However, after entering, he shockingly discovered that his Third Senior Martial Brother was unexpectedly absent.

Astonished, Han Li couldn't help but ask Song Meng, who was cleaning a blue longsword magic tool, "Fourth Senior Martial Brother, where is Third Senior Martial Brother?"

"Senior Martial Brother Liu went to go find Sixth Junior Martial Brother to persuade him, as our odds for tonight's battle will be far greater if Junior Martial Brother Wu agrees to come. However from my perspective, Senior Martial Brother Liu is just wasting time! If that fellow Wu Xuan wanted to help us, he wouldn't have left in the first place!" Song Meng said without raising his head.

"He went to find Sixth Senior Martial Brother?"

Han Li wrinkled his brow. Just as Han Li wanted to ask a few more particular questions, Liu Jing had returned wearing a queer expression.

“Junior Martial Brother Liu, is your Junior Martial Brother Wu still unwilling to come? If it’s like that, then forget about it. Having one less person does not matter as the nine of us are more than enough to deal with that Black Fiend School.” The oldest male disciple of Junior Martial Sister Chen’s group said without care.

“If it was like, it would be fine! But the key part of my trip, was that I simply couldn’t find Junior Martial Brother Wu!” Liu Jing unhurriedly said with a bitter smile.

At this moment all of them, including Han Li, had blank stares.

“How can that be, Senior Martial Brother Lu? Wasn’t that coward staying at a nearby tavern? Could it be possible that he returned to Master early?” Zhong Weiniang blinked with wide eyes and guessed.

“No! I already asked the inn’s boss about this. After Junior Martial Brother Wu went out yesterday morning, he never returned. The inn’s clothes washer didn’t clean anything of his and nor does it seem he had returned to the sect.” Liu Jin shook his head; his words were filled with worry.

Hearing this, the others began spiritedly discussing about it, but nobody could figure out what had happened.

However, while off to the side, Han Li faintly thought, ‘Could it be that Wu Xuan was unlucky and had actually been captured by the Black Fiend School?’

Perhaps because Liu Jing's thoughts were the same as Han Li's, he made this decisively announcement after gazing at the night sky, "Let's put off the matter of Junior Martial Brother Wu for now. We're setting off! We must be victorious in our fight so that we may thoroughly exterminate the Black Fiend School!"

Chapter 317: Four Symbols Formation

As soon as the curtain of night descended, a group of unexpected visitors flew from the sky into the dark Imperial City. The group consisted of Han Li and eight other Yellow Maple Valley cultivators.

With their magic tools, they arrived above the pitch-black walls of the forbidden city. The leader, Liu Jing, glanced at this so-called forbidden area. After a slight moment of hesitation, he extended his arm forward with great heroism.

“Go.”

Without hesitation or doubt, Liu Jing resolutely said this, before he took the lead and charged in.

When the others saw this, they naturally followed closely behind him. The fear toward the Seven Sect prohibition had long ago been tossed to the back of their minds.

Han Li wasn't at the front of the charge. Instead, he chose to fly at the back of the group and deliberately fell a bit behind.

This actually wasn't because of any particular thoughts; rather, this was because he was silently feeling out the “Five Elements Reversal Great Formation” he had installed last night.

When they arrived several kilometers away from the Imperial

Palace, the corner of Han Li's mouth formed a mysterious smile.

Excellent! The great formation was still intact and the Spiritual Qi mark he secretly placed wasn't damaged in the slightest. This caused Han Li to feel exceptionally happy.

After a moment, the nine of them were hovering above the Imperial Palace as they looked down at the entirety of it.

“Everyone listen up! For this operation, we will act according to our previously discussed arrangements. Our forces will be divided into two groups. The first group will hurry to the current Emperor of Yue's sleeping quarters and rescue him from the hands of the Black Fiend School, and prevent them from taking the State of Yue's Emperor as a hostage out of desperation. The second group will head to the cold palace where the Black Fiend School Master is located and first focus on killing the four Great Blood Servants. Then the two teams will regroup before finally subduing the secluded Black Fiend School Master.” With a solemn expression, Liu Jing repeated his plans for the night, causing the listeners to repeatedly nod their heads.

The members of each team have already been decided. The two female cultivators, Chen Qiaoqing and Zhong Weiniang, formed the first group and will be rescuing the Emperor of the State of Yue. Liu Jing and the rest formed the second group and would throw themselves at the four Great Blood Servants that were guarding the cold palace. Han Li was included among them.

“Seventh Junior Marital Sister, Junior Martial Sister Chen, be very careful!” Liu Jing urged them with great concern before they

split up.

After the two women gave a solemn response, they flew down to the side. They silently disappearing into the darkness soon after.

“From now on, if anyone sees a cultivator, do not hold back. Any cultivators casually moving about in the Imperial Palace are certain to be enemies from the Black Fiend School. We will begin now! Let us create an opportunity for our two Junior Martial Sisters.”

Han Li and the others followed after them.

After a short moment, the seven of them descended from the sky in an arrogantly domineering manner and were immediately discovered by the Black Fiend School Disciples guarding the perimeter of the cold palace.

After many sharp whistles were blown, countless magic techniques and tools assaulted them from every direction.

“Even mere specks of light dare to outshine the moon!”

After Liu Jing grandly raised his hand, a sparkling silk scarf flew out from his hand. In an instant, the scarf had formed a huge barrier that protected Han Li and everyone else behind it from the incoming attacks. It seemed he was truly confident in the power of this magic tool.

The moment the silk scarf unfolded, a barrage of magic techniques and tools fell upon it, causing it to release a dazzling white light. Not only was there not the slightest damage on the silk scarf as expected, but a few magic techniques had also been reflected, leaving a few Black Fiend School Disciples battered and confused.

“Senior Martial Brother Liu, good move!”

Upon seeing this, Song Meng, who was standing alongside Liu Jing, loudly shouted out in praise. Soon after, he threw away what he was grasping in his hand without any restraint.

A huge blue sword then appeared out of thin air. This was Song Meng’s favorite top quality magic tool, the “Blue Threaded Sword”.

“Go!”

Song Meng formed an incantation gesture with his hands. The huge blue sword then released a long shriek and started spinning itself like a wheel. The sword’s great display left the anxious Black Fiend School disciples in shock.

When Song Meng saw this, a wicked grin faintly appeared on his face.

He pointed two fingers toward the Blue Threaded Sword that had transformed into a disk.

The disk's blue radiance suddenly shrank and then expanded, shooting out countless threads of blue light and enveloping everything underneath it within a range of about a hundred meters.

The Black Fiend School disciples that saw this felt their souls leaving their bodies from fright. They all activated various defensive magic tools and techniques in an attempt to block this heaven shrouding attack.

Successions of wretched screams could be heard.

A majority of Black Fiend School disciples were unable to withstand the penetrating attack of the countless blue threads of light. They either died a miserable death after turning into honeycombs or managed to survive by protecting their vitals. But even then, the injuries they received from the attack would have left them unable to fight.

“Myriad Threads Under the Heavens! Good move! As expected, Junior Martial Brother Song's long famed technique is quite different from the rumors.”

When one of Chen Qiaoqian's Senior Martial Brothers saw the might of this attack, he couldn't help but sincerely praise it. Song Meng's face revealed slight pride in response.

At this moment, several people calmly landed at the great entrance of the cold palace. Those Black Fiend School disciples that

managed to luckily survive had already lost themselves to fear and didn't dare to attack..

“Start the [Four Symbols Formation](#) and trap them within.”

The Four Symbols Formation (四象阵) refers to the four divisions of the twenty eight constellations: Azure Dragon 青龍 | 青龙, White Tiger 白虎, Vermillion Bird 朱雀, Black Tortoise 玄武.

Just as the remaining Black Fiend School Disciples were about to confront the their group with fear and trepidation, an incomparably cold voice came from the cold palace.

A white silhouette releasing a cold and hazy white mist had appeared at the entrance in the blink of an eye. This was the “Ice Demon” that happened to be on duty.

He was the one who gave those orders from a moment ago, with teeth clenched in anger. Now, he was looking at the Yellow Maple Valley Cultivators in both rage and alarm.

“Humph! This monster will be taking your lives!”

When Liu Jing heard those words, he looked at this person's cultivation and immediately realized he was one of the great Blood Servants. After he coldly snorted, he shot two streaks of silver light straight toward his head.

When the others saw this, their magic tools began to shine. They thought to immediately make a united attack against the newly

appeared Black Fiend School expert. After all, this wasn't a practice match against fellow sect members; they naturally wouldn't fight alone.

Han Li equivalently took out his six golden blades from his storage pouch and shot them out.

If this attack was enough to kill this Blood Servant, Han Li would naturally be happy to do it!

But before their attacks could land, the scenery before their eyes blurred for a moment and underwent a huge change. Everyone was greatly shocked to discover that in the blink of an eye they had suddenly appeared in a world of frost and snow.

A vast expanse of whiteness surrounded them with bone-chilling winds and huge drifting snowflakes filled the entire sky. Where did that white clothed silhouette go?

Although Liu Jing and company were shocked, they knew that they had fallen into the Four Symbols Formation. Thus after a brief moment of panic, they had all regained their composure.

After all, they were Foundation Establishment cultivators from the same sect and had nothing to fear from this minor formation.

“Hehe! Your courage is quite great, actually daring to injure our School's disciples! Properly stay put for the moment in our School's great protection formation.” That ice cold voice sounded

as if it came from every direction at the same time, causing a truly astonishing impression.

“Four Symbols Formation?”

“Does anyone here comprehend this formation spell? We had best break out quickly. Else, we will be letting the four great Blood Servants gather together and that would prove troublesome.” Liu Jing didn’t take notice of the ice demon’s infuriating words and instead said this to the others with a calm expression.

When he said this, the others mutually looked at each other and didn’t speak for a short while.

“I understand a bit of the Dao of Formation Spells and have heard of this Four Symbols Formation before. However, I didn’t particularly study the specific method to break this formation. This formation spell can be considered to be an obscure type. As such, one normally wouldn’t study such a formation.” Chen Qiaoqian’s Senior Martial Sister hesitantly said, interrupting the awkward silence.

“This is a bit troublesome. Could it be we have to use brute force to break the formation?” Liu Jing wrinkled his brow and muttered to himself with reluctance.

Relying on brute force to break a formation is admittedly a simple and direct method. However, not only was it more time consuming, but it would also consume a large amount of everyone’s magic power. Which would naturally put them at a

huge disadvantage in the great battle following the destruction of the formation. Perhaps this was the true intention of why the enemy has used this formation!

When the others heard this, they looked at each other with worry and dismay.

At this moment, a very curious voice spoke out.

“Yi! Junior Martial Brother Han, what are you doing?”

Song Meng didn't understand the slightest bit about formation spells and wasn't troubling himself with thinking about how to break the formation. Instead he was looking around and actually saw Han Li's actions.

Han Li was currently grasping a clear crystal ball magic tool and placed it in front of his eyes. Gazing thought it, he was staring at a particular direction.

This peculiar action strongly piqued Song Meng's curiosity, causing him to ask this without thinking.

This question attracted the other's attention causing them all to look toward Han Li with puzzlement.

Han Li put down the crystal ball with an ordinary expression. Then he turned his head toward Liu Jing and said, “I have likely found a gap in the formation!”

“What? You found a weakness!”

Han Li’s words caused everyone’s face to reveal pleasant surprise. Liu Jing was particularly overjoyed.

Chapter 318: Qing Wen's Reappearance

“As expected, Han Li is far beyond ordinary, being able to find a hole so quickly. What is its weakness?” Liu Jing praised Han Li and amiably asked.

Han Li faintly smiled and suddenly handed the crystal ball over.

“Senior Martial Brother, look into this Violet Light Orb and you’ll understand.” Han Li pointed in the direction he had just looked at.

When Liu Jing heard this, he took the magic tool with great curiosity and carefully looked into it.

After he took a glance, Liu Jing revealed astonishment. After a short moment, he passed the crystal ball back to Han Li and lowered his head, muttering to himself.

Another moment passed by before he raised his head and anxiously said to the others, “Han Li’s words are true. For some unknown reason, the Spiritual Qi fluctuations in that direction appears much thinner. It seems that this formation was laid out in a hurry and exposed an unintentional flaw.” Liu Jing’s voice grew louder as if he were brimming with confidence.

“Then what does Senior Martial Brother Liu intend to do?” Chen Qiaoqian’s Senior Martial Sister couldn’t help but ask.

“Concentrate all of our attacks at the weak point. I am confident we will be able to break this formation without expending much magic power.” Liu Jing said with certainty.

“Since it is like that, we should act quickly!” When Song Meng heard this, he could no longer wait. He immediately raised his hand and released his “Blue Threaded Sword”, causing it to spin above his head.

The others wore expressions of eagerness after hearing Liu Jing’s words.

When Liu Jing saw this, he no longer hesitated and immediately exclaimed, “Good! Let’s break through this formation and give our enemies a show.”

After this was said, over ten magic tools emitted a dazzling radiance and fiercely shot toward the formation’s flaw.

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Outside of the formation, the ice demon felt extremely anxious while commanding the school disciples to take up an encirclement formation.

Ever since the Black Fiend School Master had requested the four great Blood Servants to remain within the palace, they should have been taking turns to guard in pairs.

But Xie She, who was originally supposed to be on guard with him, had recently reached the Great Success stage in his cultivation. Using the excuse of wanting to immediately enter mid Foundation Establishment, he stealthily ran off to the blood prison to cultivate. As Ice Demon, he was unwilling to offend the brilliant rising talent in the four Blood Servants, so he had tacitly turned a blind eye.

However, that moment of neglect had left him alone while guarding the entrance against an invasion of so many strong enemies.

However, it was fortunate that he was quick-witted!

He first used this “Four Divisions Formation” to trap the enemy, and then dispatched disciples to the blood prison and the rear palace to quickly fetch the other three Blood Servants without delay.

He clearly understood that these few Qi Condensation disciples were no match against these strong enemies. But luckily, the enemy had been trapped within the Four Divisions Formation, buying quite a bit of time!

So long as he could stall for a bit of time, his three comrades would be certain to promptly arrive.

With the four great Blood Servants acting together, the ice demon would have nothing to be afraid of.

Just as he was thinking this, a loud rumbling vibration could be heard from within the Four Divisions Formation.

The thick white fog that filled the formation was then fiercely blown away, appearing as if the formation was about to be destroyed.

“What is this? It is impossible for the Four Symbols Formation to break so quickly. Something must’ve went wrong!” When the ice demon saw this, his pale face concealed by the cold Qi had turned somewhat green.

“Sir Ice Demon, the enemies had struck far too quickly. A few of the disciples that were in charge of the formation had died in the attack, causing the Four Symbols Formation to be insufficiently manned. It is possible that the enemy saw through the gap.” When a nearby Black Fiend School Disciple saw this, he carefully gave an explanation.

When the ice demon heard this, he became alarmed and furious. Just as he was about to loudly rebuke him, he heard a gentle voice from behind him.

“Ice Demon, what happened? The Four Symbols Formation had actually activated but it appears unable to hold the enemy.”

When the ice demon heard this, he immediately felt relieved.

“Qing Wen, [it's good](#) that you've quickly arrived!” The ice demon

couldn't conceal his happiness and hastily turned his head to look at him.

Han Li previously met Qing Wen at the Great South Trade Assembly in Chapter 130

At an unknown time, two people had appeared about fifteen meters behind him.

One of them appeared thirty years old with a beardless and unremarkable face. He was wearing an azure Daoist robe and looked at the Four Symbol Formation's strange condition with a solemn expression.

"Who is invading us? And where is that youngster, Xie She?" Tie Luo stroked his bald head with an expression of bloodlust.

"Right now, Xie She is..."

A huge rumbling from the Four Symbols Formation interrupted the ice demon. The Four Symbols Formation's dense fog ruptured and completely disappeared, revealing the silhouettes of Han Li's group.

After clearly seeing the number and cultivation of these invaders, Qing Wen's complexion slightly darkened and Tie Luo appeared greatly astonished.

"Haha! You evil cultivators believed that a broken formation was able to trap us Yellow Maple Valley cultivators? That's just wishful

thinking!” After Song Meng appeared once more before the cold palace, he couldn’t help but loudly yell this with excitement.

“Yellow Maple Valley?”

Qing Wen and the other two were slightly startled. However, after a short moment of thought, they quickly recovered. Apart from the Seven Great Sects, who else could dispatch so many Foundation Establishment cultivators in the State of Yue?

“Why have you stormed the Imperial palace in the night? Could it be you are unafraid of violating the prohibition?” Without waiting for Liu Jing and company to speak, Qing Wen calmly asked.

He knew about the Seven Sects’ ban and hoped he could use this to cause Liu Jing’s group to become fearful of the consequences.

Liu Jing coldly snorted, and before he could open mouth, he heard an alarmed cry from the bald man.

“It’s you! Aren’t you from the Thousand Bamboo School? How are you together with the Yellow Maple Valley cultivators?” As the large bald man, Tie Luo, swept his gaze across them, he discovered Han Li among them and couldn’t help but loudly ask this with amazement and confusion.

These words left both enemies and allies stunned. In a flash, all eyes gathered upon Han Li.

At this moment, Daoist Priest Qing Wen had clearly recognized Han Li and couldn't help but twitch his face. Disbelief could be seen in his eyes.

“When have I ever said that I was someone from the Thousand Bamboo School?” Han Li coldly gazed at the large bald man and then turned his glance toward Daoist Priest Qing Wen.

That year at the Great South Meeting, Qing Wen had urged Han Li to travel together with him. Surprisingly, Han Li now found him here.

As a result of this, he was able to answer the lingering questions from back then; namely, why Qing Wen made such great efforts to journey together with low grade cultivators and why that yellow-clothed man had pursued and attempted to kill Han Li.

Now understanding the entire story, Han Li was furious and felt an intense desire to kill Qing Wen.

“Nonsense. If you aren't from the Thousand Bamboo School, then why can you use puppet techniques?” The large bald man retorted, refusing to let the matter drop.

“Are we required to tell you the techniques that Junior Martial Brother Han is able to use? Everyone, attack! These people are deliberately stalling for time. Do not fulfill their wishes!” Liu Jing's expression darkened before suddenly saying this with a stern voice.

With that said, he extended his arm and a streak of silver light directly attacked the ice demon in front.

Upon hearing this, the Yellow Maple Valley disciples suddenly realized and inwardly cursed the enemy's craftiness. They then released their magic tools without restraint, and immediately joined the fight.

As Han Li had been staring at Daoist Priest Qing Wen earlier, he immediately performed a pincer attack with Chen Qiaoqian's Senior Martial Brother Wang, in an attempt to trap Qing Wen.

Without speaking further, Han Li patted the storage pouch at his waist, causing over ten streaks of red, black, and golden light to simultaneously soar out. After they hovered above Han Li for a moment, they shot toward the enemy with the sound of a faint explosion.

Han Li didn't bother speaking to Qing Wen as he didn't have the slightest intention to reminisce about old times.

When Qing Wen and that Senior Martial Brother Wang saw Han Li's display of immense strength, both of their expressions changed significantly.

Senior Martial Brother Wang revealed pleasant surprise, while inwardly praising Han Li. 'As expected, Han Li's reputation as an expert that had previously killed many Foundation Establishment cultivators was well-earned; he is truly outstanding!'

Daoist Priest Qing Wen revealed a cautious appearance and faintly shrouded his body in a layer of azure Qi. Upon seeing Han Li's vicious actions, he knew Han Li intended to kill him. Naturally, he wouldn't just wait for death like a sitting duck.

In turn, he also didn't speak any rubbish before suddenly extending his hand toward the attacking magic tools.

Five azure bead magic tools flew from his hand and formed a pentagon around him in an instant.

Then, with a flash of azure light, Daoist Priest Qing Wen was enveloped in a cloud of azure mist as a pentagonal prism barrier appeared around him out of thin air, closely protecting him.

Han Li's Golden Swarm Blades, Black Dragon's Claws, and Blazing Chain Tridents simultaneously struck Qing Wen's pentagonal prism barrier, producing an explosion of blinding light. Bursts of radiance flew in every direction, yet the strange barrier was left unscathed from the attack.

"Han Li, my Azurewood True Barrier can only be broken by Core Formation cultivators. Foundation Establishment cultivators like yourself aren't able to damage it in the slightest. You had best give up!" Qing Wen suddenly said this with a slight smile, speaking to Han Li in a very intimate manner.

Chapter 319: The Four Great Blood Servants

“I’m not so sure about that!” Han Li coldly sneered.

Han Li then formed an incantation gesture with his hands, causing his magic tools that were attacking the azure barrier to loudly howl, before flying into the sky and converging as one.

This scene stunned Qing Wen as he didn’t know what Han Li intended to do. However, as he was also of the cunning sort, how could he allow Han Li to perform his magic so easily? His hands immediately shined, producing a dazzling golden ring in each hand that released dense cold Qi. One could tell from their appearance that the rings were extraordinary.

“Go!”

Qing Wen softly yelled as he threw out the rings without the slightest hesitation. They turned into twin golden streaks of light as they directly attacked Han Li.

Han Li raised his eyebrows in alarm, and with a menacing expression, he tightly gripped his white scale shield.

However, before those magic tools struck their target, three green foot-long streaks had suddenly flown in from the side and intercepted the two streaks of golden light.

“Fiendish Daoist, don’t tell me you’ve forgotten about me?”

Senior Martial Brother Wang flashed Han Li a friendly smile as he controlled the green streaks of light.

When Han Li saw this, he felt relieved and returned the smile.

However, Qing Wen wasn't feeling calm like these two. His complexion darkened as his gaze started shifting everywhere.

Not long after, he had reached his wit's end.

After all, simultaneously controlling the Azurewood True Barrier and Goldlock Rings had nearly used up the entirety of his spiritual sense. He was unlike Han Li, who had learned the Great Development Technique and was able to smoothly control so many magic tools.

Although he possessed a few incisive magic tools, he didn't dare to lightly use them. Using the entirety of one's spiritual sense to control magic tools was very dangerous, as it left the user incapable of paying attention to their surroundings.

Furthermore, cultivators being able to control over ten magic tools simultaneously in an attack was something rarely seen. In part, Han Li was able to do this because these magic tools were created as sets, and only used the same amount of magic power as three magic tools.

If it were truly more than ten separate top grade magic tools, even if Han Li's spiritual sense could support it, he wouldn't be

able to produce enough magic power to activate them.

Supporting about five magic tools was the limit of Han Li's magic power. This was why Han Li favored using complete sets of magic tools, as they allowed him to display the full power of the Great Development Technique.

As for why Han Li was able to control the eight children blades of the "Golden Beetle Swarm Blades", it absolutely wasn't because of direct control. He instead completely relied on the mother blade in his hand to control the children blades. Its current power and flexibility was incomparable to before as it was different as heaven and earth.

As Qing Wen was hesitating on what action to take, Han Li had finished casting his technique.

"Giant Sword Technique."

Han Li said those words with an ice-cold tone.

Soon after, the magic tools that were spiralling above Qing Wen released a blinding radiance.

In that tri-colored radiance, the gold, black, and red streaks had intertwined, forming a huge sword of light that spanned over thirty meters in midair.

This "Giant Sword Technique" was something he had learned

from the Azure Essence Sword Technique written compilation, the golden page. This was also the only sword controlling technique that he could use with his Foundation Establishment cultivation. Naturally, its might was beyond ordinary.

Although Qing Wen and Senior Martial Brother Wang were locked in combat with their magic tools, they both revealed expressions of astonishment. Even an idiot could tell just how immensely powerful Han Li's technique was.

Qing Wen inwardly complained without end, immediately abandoning the two golden rings. Instead, he hurriedly searched himself and took out a shiny brass mirror.

At this moment, Han Li pointed at the huge sword of light with an ice-cold expression.

The huge sword fiercely chopped down from the sky without sound. The crushing blow was about to break through barrier and man with astonishing grandeur.

Upon seeing this, Senior Martial Brother Wang had forgotten to take advantage of Qing Wen's moment of distraction to destroy his golden rings. Instead, he was mesmerized while staring at the huge sword's heaven stunning might.

His entire mind was occupied with the thoughts of whether or not he would be able to withstand such a strike.

As the target of the attack, Daoist Priest Qing Wen's expression grew extremely solemn, and he hastily tossed the brass mirror above him.

The brass mirror quickly flew out of the light barrier and flashed, producing a yellow cloud about three meters wide above him. In the blink of an eye, it solidified into a huge shield that continuously revolved above him.

Han Li's complexion sunk as he formed an incantation gesture with his hand. The huge sword of light thunderously roared and chopped down with even more astonishing might, reaching the brass shield in an instant.

Along with the sound of an immense explosion, the shield released an immense yellow radiance. But underneath the huge sword's fierce blow, it was only able to endure for a short moment before releasing a wail as it broke into pieces.

With nothing left to stop the sword of light, it chopped down on the azure prism barrier, causing it to groan underneath the huge sword's immense pressure.

Seeing the huge sword's astonishing might, Qing Wen's expression finally became panicked.

His hands flickered with azure light before he quickly pressed them against opposite sides of the prism barrier. He then did his utmost to pour spiritual power into the Azurewood True Barrier in an attempt to strengthen its defensive power.

The three-colored light released by the huge sword strained the azure light barrier underneath it, causing the barrier to produce a crackle. With Qing Wen's desperate assistance, the Azurewood True Barrier managed to withstand the might of the light sword's downward chop.

In the following moment, Han Li expedited his magic techniques. He wished to use the huge sword to forcefully break through the light barrier and kill him as revenge for his previous betrayal. On the other side, Qing Wen was madly pouring Spiritual Power into the light barrier in an attempt to exhaust the sword's strength and save his life.

At this moment, Senior Martial Brother Wang finally came to his senses and quickly destroyed the two golden rings with ease. He then commanded his three streaks of light to strike Qing Wen in a relentless charge, clearly understanding that Han Li was stuck in a deadlock with Qing Wen.

So long as he provided even the slightest assistance, he would be the final straw that would tip the scales and overwhelm the enemy, easily killing this formidable opponent. With this, he would be entitled to a significant share of this Blood Servant's treasure when the time came.

With that thought, the fire in his heart became even more fervent.

But as Senior Martial Brother Wang was dreaming, Qing Wen's

complexion greatly changed, and a streak of yellow light shot toward Qing Wen at the speed of lightning. In the following instant, he had disappeared from his original location, allowing Han Li's tri-colored sword of light to strike at the ground and create a large hole three meters deep.

Senior Martial Brother Wang's three streaks of green light naturally missed its target, causing him to glance in the direction of the yellow streak of light with alarm and anger.

As expected, Daoist Priest Qing Wen's light barrier appeared nearly a hundred meters away. A yellow-clothed youth with a lazy appearance stood by his side. He looked at Senior Martial Brother Wang and said with complete calm, "This person had previously saved my life. Could your esteemed self not kill him off so lightly?"

After he said this, he chuckled and continued, looking at Han Li with a smile, "Brother Han, I truly didn't think that we'd one day meet again. Wu Jiuzhi pays his respects."

The unperturbed youth was that young cultivator Wu Jiuzhi [who had attempted to pickpocket](#) Han Li that previous year at the Great South Meeting. However, at this moment, his body was faintly emitting a strange yellow light and his cultivation had reached the early Foundation Establishment stage.

Han Li met Wu Jiuzhi at the Great South Meeting. At the time, he had attempted to pickpocket him.

"Jiuzhi, this person walks an entirely different path from us. Why must you speak so much? Since you've come, all four of us

can now fight.” Daoist Priest Qing Wen retracted his previously thrilled expression and couldn’t help but resentfully look at Han Li.

When Wu Jiuzhi heard this, he sighed and didn’t speak any further with Han Li.

When Qing Wen saw this, he suddenly made two long whistles followed by a short whistle.

When Tie Luo and the Ice Demon heard this, they revealed pleasant surprise. They immediately leapt out of the Yellow Maple Valley’s joint attack and flew toward Qing Wen and Wu Jiuzhi.

“What going on? Another one has appeared! This is going to be troublesome.”

When Liu Jing saw the sudden appearance of Wu Jiuzhi, he immediately understood the battle’s circumstances had shifted and couldn’t help but wrinkle his brow.

Now that four of these truly unordinary Blood Servants had gathered together, it was clear to Liu Jing that the situation had become more difficult to deal with. In the previous battle against the two Blood Servants with his group of five, they weren’t able to even injure one of them. Even with their advantage of numbers, they had only been able to gain the upper hand.

With that thought, Liu Jing prudently called out for Han Li and

Senior Martial Brother Wang to stand beside them.

As Han Li looked at Wu Jiuzhi who had just appeared, he felt an indescribable feeling in his heart. During that year, he had quite a favorable impression of that strange, spirited youth. However, gods make fools of men and now the two had no choice but to fight to the death.

“Demon Transformation.”

Qing Wen and the other Blood Servants realized that by relying on ordinary means, they would be unable to win against Han Li’s group, as they were outnumbered nearly two to one.

Following Qing Wen’s cold declaration, their bodies all released a blood-red radiance. They then transformed into four cocoons of blood-red light, and began their demon transformation, intending to eliminate Han Li’s group in a single move.

Chapter 320: Broken Cocoon

When the Yellow Maple Valley cultivators saw this, they were reminded of what Han Li had told them about the Blood Servants' Demonic Transformation. They all knew that during their transformation, the Blood Servants would become easy, stationary targets. Thus, they launched magic tools and techniques, assaulting the four cocoons of light without restraint. Naturally, they wouldn't let go of an opportunity like this to subdue the enemy.

Unfortunately, as Han Li had said, the light spheres were incredibly hard. Despite the violent storm of attacks, the cocoons remained intact. They didn't appear to be even slightly damaged, causing the faces of the Yellow Maple Valley cultivators to become unsightly.

“Everyone, if you have any last resorts, use them! Do not hold back! If you don't use them now, we will be in dire straits when they emerge from their cocoons!”

With that said, Liu Jing immediately withdrew his magic tools and solemnly took out a golden talisman, pressing it between his two hands. He started muttering a mysterious incantation, causing the talisman to radiate with increasingly dazzling golden light.

Although Han Li didn't know what grade that talisman was, he grew alarmed upon seeing it. Since Liu Jing, a mid Foundation Establishment cultivator, required an incantation to activate it, it meant that this talisman was no common item.

When the others saw this, they looked at each other and then revealed their hidden capabilities.

The most eye-catching among them were Song Meng and Chen Qiaoqian's Senior Martial Sister. They both took out an inscribed treasure talisman and then immediately sat down to activate them. Blue and grey radiance emitted from their treasure talismans, causing those who looked on to feel envious.

Treasure talismans aren't easy to acquire for Foundation Establishment cultivators, even with the backing of a large clan. Only those who were looked upon with great affection by their seniors would be granted them. Otherwise, with merely their own wealth and status, how could they possibly acquire such a treasure?

The others were unwilling to be outdone and made a display of their own. They either strenuously used impressive magic techniques or brought out wondrous magic tools for their attacks. Brilliance immediately filled the sky as their magic tools and techniques were chaotically flourished.

Han Li used neither his talisman treasures nor his astonishingly powerful "Giant Sword Technique". Instead, he chose to use his most energy-efficient method. With a wave of his hands, several heavy objects fell to the ground in front of him, four of his puppet beasts.

The puppet beasts opened their ice-cold eyes and their bloodthirsty maws, fiercely shooting out several beams of light in a well practiced manner. Han Li stood behind them, taking

advantage of the situation to restore the magic power used during the previous fight.

As he had yet to encounter that Black Fiend School Master, he wasn't willing to use the entirety of his strength and prematurely exhaust his magic power.

Han Li intended to preserve his magic power in preparation for any contingencies in the upcoming battle. He had a few more hidden cards, but he wouldn't reveal them until the time came.

The appearance of the puppet beasts had somewhat surprised the others, but they immediately went back to focusing on their own matters.

After all, the techniques one used and the magic arts one cultivated were one's own secrets; nobody would be so tactless as to ask about them.

Those who knew the origin of the "Puppet Technique" would believe that Han Li had acquired it from Li Huayuan. As a Core Formation cultivator, it wasn't difficult to imagine that he had killed several Thousand Bamboo School cultivators and acquired a few of their school's magic arts along the way!

Thus, the others only felt at most great curiosity toward Han Li's puppet beasts.

At this moment, Liu Jing's golden talisman finished activating.

Trembling lightly, it transformed into a streak of golden light before flying toward the blood-red light cocoons.

An explosion rang out as a burst of golden light created a snowstorm of luminous floating specks that filled the entire sky. The dazzling scene was as fantastical as a dream.

However, this beautiful marvel concealed an extremely sorrowful desire to kill. During this dazzling scene, Liu Jing formed an incantation gesture, causing the luminous specks in the sky to undergo a strange transformation. Gradually shrinking and expanding, they finally assumed shape of small golden swords. Although the swords were only an inch long, each one possessed a threateningly cold and incomparably incisive air.

“Thousand Blades Technique.”

Liu Jing said softly, revealing the name of his metal attribute magic technique.

Everyone who saw this scene, aside from the two who were focusing on activating their treasure talismans, was left stunned.

Metal attribute magic techniques were the rarest among the five elements, most commonly taking the form of defensive auxiliary magic techniques such as the “Golden Armor Technique” or the “Iron Skin Technique”. Liu Jing’s offensive metal attribute area magic technique exceeded expectations, leaving Han Li and the others dumbfounded. They all slowed their actions, wanting to witness the entirety of this marvelous spell.

Thousands of shining, sharp golden swords were suspended above the cocoons of light, emitting a frightening pressure.

Liu Jing then chanted the activation incantation, causing the small golden swords to hail down and stab into the spheres of blood-red light.

Pupu. Everyone heard a series of muffled stabs as the golden lights entered the blood-red spheres. Brilliance scattered in every direction like a dense storm of fireworks.

Under the other's attacks, the light cocoons had displayed no change. But under this fierce attack, the cocoons began to gradually swell as if knowing the fearsomeness of this attack and responded by taking the initiative to reinforce the blood-red light as increasingly intense waves of light swords struck down.

When Liu Jing saw this, he felt neither joy nor worry. Since his attacks pressured the light cocoons to change, they were shown to be effective. So long as he increased the power of his attacks, he would be able to break through the blood-red light.

But at this moment, more than half of the small swords had already fallen and the light cocoons still appeared as red as they were at the start, looking as if they had handled the attacks with ease.

“Senior Martial Brother Liu, allow me to lend a hand!”

Song Meng shouted loudly.

The grey talisman in his hand transformed into a meter-long, gray spear that emitted a strange grey Qi.

“Let’s get rid of the Blood Servant on the left first; do not scatter our attacks.” Seeing that Song Meng had condensed the true form of his treasure talisman, Liu Jing said this with unsuppressed joy.

Soon after, he pointed at the small swords that had yet to fall.

Suddenly, the gold swords started falling in a dense barrage toward the cocoon of leftmost blood servant, the ice demon.

Following the rumbling sounds of impact, the cocoon of blood-red light seemed to have shriveled significantly.

Having seen this, the others joined in, using magic techniques and magic tools in a simultaneous attack. Song Meng followed with his grey spear, causing it to release a sharp chilling wail as it shot forth.

As the “Thousand Blades Techniques” and the others’ instantaneous attacks whittled away at the remaining thin layer of the previously invulnerable blood cocoon, the silhouette within could vaguely be seen.

The grey spear was able to finally penetrate the cocoon, causing a furious, deafening roar to echo in everyone's ears. Two sharp, white crystal claws suddenly emerged from the blood-red light, immediately tearing away at the remaining shreds of the blood cocoon with ferocity and revealing the true appearance of the silhouette within.

It was a half demon-transformed, white monster.

At first glance, this person appeared to be an incomparably beautiful and refined youth. However, two small white horns protruded from the top of his head and a foot-long pure white tail sprouted out from behind him, each covered with faintly sparkling, white scales. In addition to his two extremely sharp claws, his entire body exhibited layers upon layers of demonic properties.

Two bowl-sized bloody holes were present on his shoulders. The flesh around them continuously squirmed and contracted, causing onlookers to feel their blood run cold. But in the blink of an eye, the bloody holes completely healed.

“You're all courting death!” The half-transformed ice demon yelled fiercely. Clearly, he had retained enough of his mind to be able to speak.

Although he didn't finish his demon transformation, he believed that with the demonic characteristics of his current body, he would be able to buy time for his companions to finish their transformations.

The complexions of Liu Jing and the others, who had yet to see the demonic transformation, paled after seeing this frightening appearance. Although they had previously heard Han Li mention the strange appearance of the Blood Servants' demonform, they became extremely shocked and apprehensive upon seeing it with their own eyes.

Suddenly, several beams of white light struck the ice demon's bare body and immediately sent it tumbling, causing it to appear quite battered.

Unwilling to hear the enemy's rubbish, Han Li had immediately ordered his puppet beasts to attack.

When the others saw this, they came to their senses and madly resumed their barrage of attacks.

However, the ice demon that fell to the floor released a cold mist from its entire body. As the mist spread, he disappeared from his original location.

This left the others shocked, hastily looking in every direction.

According to their previous experiences, when such a scene occurred, the opponent had used an evasion technique and quickly escaped. However, such a technique wouldn't have allowed them to flee far.

Not a single person could be seen near the three remaining light cocoons. The ordinary Black Fiend School Sect disciples had long fled as they weren't foolish enough to remain.

When Han Li saw this, his heart trembled as he suddenly thought of something. He hastily patted his storage pouch, taking out his white scale shield and tortoise shell magic tools. He hurriedly had them revolve around his body as he loudly yelled, "Everyone, be careful! He concealed himself!"

Just as Han Li said this, a woman's miserable shriek could be heard, causing everyone to hastily look in the direction of the scream in alarm.

They saw that Junior Martial Sister Chen's Senior Martial Sister, who was originally sitting down activating the talisman treasure, was now lying on her back. A large hole had appeared on her chest as if someone had reached in and torn out her heart.

As she laid in a pool of her own blood, her beautiful appearance became slightly twisted as her limbs continuously thrashed about. Her eyes were filled with an incredulous fear before turning into unreconciled denial as her life slipped away.

Chapter 321: Unseen Battle

“Xue Hong!”

One of Chen Qiaoqian’s Senior Martial Brothers loudly grieved for her; it seemed they were pair cultivation partners. He waved his hands, immediately shooting a black light toward the woman’s corpse that madly attacked its surroundings in an attempt to find the demon who killed her.

It could be said that the death of this Senior Martial Sister “Xue Hong” was truly unjust. Were it not for her competitive spirit, she wouldn’t have used her treasure talisman and might still be alive.

Before she attempted to activate the talisman treasure, a light muslin defensive magic tool had been hovering at her side. But, in order to hasten the activation of her treasure talisman and cut down magic power consumption, she had retrieved her magic tool — consequently, leaving herself defenseless and forfeiting her life.

It is truly unfortunate that this woman was inexperienced and made such an extremely careless mistake.

Her enemies had turned into light cocoons in front of her, and her fellow sect members surrounded her; as a result, she dared to activate this talisman treasure with an easy heart. Who could have predicted that the ice demon would emerge from the cocoon half transformed and immediately turn invisible before targeting her.

At that moment, the woman had been in the final moments of

activating the treasure talisman and was incapable of immediately stopping; thus, she had fallen prey to the ice demon's evil scheme.

When Song Meng had activated his spear treasure talisman, he hadn't employed any defenses either. However, the might of his talisman treasure was comparatively smaller, enabling him to activate it sooner. Otherwise, he might've been targeted by the concealed ice demon instead.

Furthermore, it wasn't just those two that hadn't set up any defenses, neither had Han Li nor any of the the others bothered to. They naturally wouldn't waste any magic power to deploy unnecessary defensive magic tools; after all, the light cocoons were targets incapable of striking back.

They immediately set up defensive barriers with their magic tools after Han Li's reminder, preventing any further sneak attacks. Cold sweat ran down their backs from seeing Xue Hong's tragic death; her heart was torn from her chest, leaving her to die in a pool of her own blood.

But what was most distressing, was that regardless of what methods they used, none of them were able track down this demon.

They occasionally spotted traces of him, but that demon would again disappear before they could react as if he were constantly changing his location at great speed. The ice demon was half transparent and would occasionally flicker in and out of their vision in every direction. Even with specialized autonomous magic tools, they were still unable to find a trace of him as if he had

completely disappeared.

Suddenly becoming fearful for their safety, they began looking in every direction; they had actually been completely suppressed without additional action from the ice demon.

Only Han Li looked at the present scene with a trace of bewilderment.

Senior Martial Brother Wang who fought alongside Han Li had never seen such a bloody scene before. His currently wore fearful expression with pale complexion.

Her death appeared to be a nightmare. He had originally imagined that this would be the time for him to show off his divine strength and easily wipe out the enemy. But things had turned out entirely different from how he imagined. Not long before, he had even joked about in which manner they could have possibly met their end.

With that thought, he looked at the Senior Martial Brother that was Xue Hong's pair cultivation partner, causing his face to appear even more unsightly.

Could it be that the more one feared something would happen, the more likely it was to occur?

It was unknown whether he was feeling guilty about the appearance of the ice demon or felt a desire to act from his

helplessness.

But as he despondently paced back and forth, a transparent ice-cold claw appeared from behind him from thin air, fiercely stabbing toward his heart.

The small bronze shield that was protecting Senior Martial Brother Wang's body was completely autonomous. Without waiting for a command, it flashed toward the strike and blocked it.

Dāng. Although the sharp, ice-like claws were blocked by the small bronze shield, it was instantly frozen in a layer of thick frost and bluntly fell to the ground, temporarily becoming useless.

At this moment Senior Martial Brother Wang discovered the astonishing event occurring behind him and felt blood drain from his face. He unconsciously turned around, incessantly looking in every direction, losing his mind to panic.

After seeing there was nothing behind him, he hesitated for a moment before crouching to pick up the small bronze shield. He wanted to thaw it so that he would be able use it once more.

“Quick, dodge!”

The nearby Liu Jing loudly yelled in alarm after seeing his actions.

“Huh?” But by the time he realized what was going on, the crisp

sound of his protective water-attribute barrier shattering caused him to feel a heart chilling wind down his back.

“Damn it!” At almost the same time Senior Martial Brother Wang realized what was going to happen, the ice demon had already left concealment to make a fatal strike.

In this instant, Senior Martial Brother Wang’s mind grew blank, filled with only the scene of Senior Martial Sister Xue Hong’s tragic death.

‘I truly didn’t think that it would be my turn so quickly!’

This was the only thought that occupied his mind.

But suddenly, his vision became hazy and he felt his body become light. His entire body flew as if he were a cloud being carried by the wind, hearing sounds of wind and thunder underneath him along with a loud, furious yell of surprise.

Soon after, his two legs met the hard ground and someone was standing before him with absolute calm.

“Senior Martial Brother Wang, are you alright?”

While not knowing whether he was alive or dead, he heard a familiar voice full of deep concern.

Upon hearing the familiar voice, he blankly turned his head and saw Liu Jing looking at him with worry.

Seeing his face, Senior Martial Brother Wang realized that he was alive and unharmed. With unconcealed happiness, he gratefully said, “Senior Martial Brother Liu, were you the one who saved me?”

Senior Martial Brother was frightened from his own voice. From his coarse voice, it could be clearly be seen that he had been truly shaken from the moment before.

When Liu Jing heard this, he revealed an awkward, embarrassed appearance and said, “I am quite ashamed to say Junior Martial Brother’s survival wasn’t my doing. Junior Martial Brother Han had acted a moment ago to save you and is currently fighting that demon! Sigh, I actually wasn’t completely convinced by your earlier words earlier that Junior Martial Brother Han had killed over ten Foundation Establishment cultivators due to his young age. But now my perspective has been broadened; Junior Martial Brother Han’s strength is truly unfathomable!”

“Junior Martial Brother Han?” When Senior Martial Brother Wang heard this, he was shocked.

He clearly remembered that Han Li had been over fifteen meters away from him. How was he able to make it in time?

With that thought, Senior Martial Brother Wang hastily turned his head toward the sounds of battle. What he saw left him

dumbstruck.

The location where he was attacked was now completely empty. However, he could hear the clangs of a fierce battle along with snarls and cries of injury. Furthermore, he could see sword Qi and sharp streaks of light flying out of nowhere and strike the nearby terrain, leaving countless deep and shallow grooves.

After a long moment, Senior Martial Brother Wang finally came to his senses.

As he thought to ask something about that astonishing scene, a violent wind suddenly blew at that location. A shining, translucent white silhouette appeared, followed by a strange figure that shot forth to attack it, leaving Senior Martial Brother Wang breathless.

The silhouette attacking the half-transformed Blood Servant appeared even more demonic than his target. His entire body was as transparent as clear crystal.

“Impossible! How are you able to see through my invisibility!? How are you able to match my speed!?”

The demon’s sparkling face was full of furious surprise and even held a trace of fear.

However, after those words left his mouth, he let out a bestial snarl and fiercely pounced forward, his body disappearing from sight once more.

The sound of battle stopped for a moment and Han Li's cold snort could be heard amongst the silence. The sounds then resumed, becoming even fiercer and were no longer confined to their original location. The sounds began to appear from every direction, causing the others, who could only hear the battle, to retreat with blanched faces.

The pair cultivation partner of the dead female cultivator was the same and could only helplessly fall back. He feared he would unknowingly become tangled in Han Li's fight with the demon and die without knowing how.

They all knew in their hearts that they were unable to intervene in this unseen battle.

“Quickly, look at the ground!” Song Meng shouted out in alarm.

When the others heard this, they couldn't help but lower their heads and look. What they saw overwhelmed them with shock.

At some unknown time, a layer of thick clear ice had condensed onto the ground. Underneath the moonlight, it appeared flawlessly smooth.

“This demon is quite crafty. He actually transformed the ground and put Junior Martial Brother Han in a disadvantage!” Song Meng anxiously said with worry.

“That doesn’t seem to be the case. Although I don’t know what movement technique Han Li is using, we were all unable to discover any trace of him, and from what we’ve heard, it doesn’t seem that Han Li is at a disadvantage. It is clear that the icy ground doesn’t have much of an effect on him. However, the transformed demon’s craftiness truly caught us by surprise, unexpectedly causing one of our sect members to lose her life. I am truly to blame for this!” Liu Jing unhurriedly said this after a moment of silence.

After hearing this and seeing Liu Jing’s solemn expression, the others didn’t know how to console him.

However, these people didn’t know that the Junior Martial Brother Han they spoke of was loudly scolding them in his heart as he fought with the ice demon.

Chapter 322: Liu Jing's "True Seal"

Han Li felt furious!

His anger wasn't due to the fact that he had saved Senior Martial Brother Wang in a moment of benevolence, or even because he had to fully utilize his Shifting Smoke Steps. Han Li's anger was due to the fact that Liu Jing and the others were squandering this opportunity to eliminate the three transforming Blood Servants. Once the three Blood Servants finished transforming, a huge dilemma would await them.

Han Li was reminded of Senior Martial Brother Wang's kind assistance during his fight with Qing Wen, and thus, when Han Li noticed that Senior Martial Brother Wang was on the verge of falling in the Ice Demon's scheme, he instantly flashed forward into order to save him.

Enraged from Han Li's intervention, the Ice Demon immediately pursued him, forcing Han Li to deal with him. But soon after, Han Li felt that this Ice Demon would prove extremely troublesome for his fellow sect members and decided it would be better for him to take care of it alone. After all, if even more of his fellow sect members died, they would be lacking in numbers for the upcoming battle.

However, during his fight with the Ice Demon, he didn't expect that the others would just stare blankly. They were actually squandering this great opportunity to attack the three remaining light cocoons!

Even so, Han Li had a faint feeling that the others didn't even know this opportunity existed due to their fear of the Ice Demon's ambush. Although they realized that having to deal with the fully transformed Blood Servants would be even more troublesome, they were still hesitant and slightly desired to retreat.

In reality, Han Li didn't come here in order to eradicate the Black Fiend School but rather for another predetermined objective. As such, he was unable to run away in a rash manner. Ever since the half-transformed Ice Demon left his cocoon, he had been trying to kill Han Li. But Han Li found that so long as he was a bit careful, the demon did not pose much of threat to him. In fact, he felt that the large bald man was significantly harder to handle in comparison to the demon.

Following the transformation, the Ice Demon acquired a transparent body, exceptional speed, and some control over cold Qi. Thus, he was now able to utilise his speed to create an illusion of invisibility similar to that of the Shifting Smoke Steps. But due to the Ice Demon's transparent body, he became even harder to detect.

Since this strange movement technique could only be displayed on land, as long as they were above ground, they could force the Ice Demon to reveal itself by using large scale magic techniques. After all, his high speed movements were only deadly within a short distance. It was unable to keep up with a cultivator's flying magic tool.

Because Liu Jing and company had never experienced this kind of close combat, they felt that their opponent was extremely

monstrous and difficult to engage. Fortunately, Han Li had often fought in this manner and naturally held greater experience in fighting such battles.

With that in mind, Han Li suddenly repelled the demon's sharp claws with a wave of his silver sword, buying himself a short moment. He then stood still to become visible and he loudly yelled, "Everyone, fly to the skies and continue to attack the other three Blood Servants. I will prevent this demon from attacking you!" Following these instructions, Han Li's figure suddenly flickered, disappearing from sight once more.

It was not surprising for Han Li that the silver sword—which had been looted during the Trial by Blood and Fire—was able to withstand the demon's sharp claws. The fact that caused Han Li to become astonished was that the claws were also undamaged.

When Liu Jing heard Han Li's instructions, he immediately understood what Han Li intended. Even so, he remained hesitant and felt extremely conflicted.

Although Liu Jing originated from a large cultivation clan, he had been captured by evil cultivators during his childhood. During that time, he suffered from extreme, agonizing torment to the extent where he had almost lost his life. It was only afterwards that he was rescued by his clan and was apprenticed to Li Huayuan.

Due to the trauma he had experienced in his childhood, Liu Jing held deep hatred toward evil cultivators. As a result, he followed an iron-blooded policy to kill all evil cultivators on sight, refusing

to allow any evil cultivator from escaping his grasp, regardless of what freakish techniques they practiced.

Much to his delight, these actions rewarded him with great popularity among other cultivators, even causing a few Seven Sect cultivators with higher cultivation than him to look at him with a trace of admiration.

Although Liu Jing continued to appear unfazed on the outside, his heart gradually began to indulge in these feelings of admiration. In fact, he later took the initiative to root out evil cultivators from every direction mostly for the sake of seeing others gaze upon him with admiration.

Naturally, Liu Jing hid this fact in the depths of his heart with extreme care and conducted himself as though he were a moral paragon. Thus, Liu Jing became known as an enemy of evil, the “iron-blooded” Senior Martial Brother Liu.

Now that another evil known as the Black Fiend School had appeared, he was compelled to eliminate it. However, they were the strongest evil cultivators he had ever encountered. He wasn't completely confident that he would be able to rely on his normal magic tools to eliminate the three remaining blood servants. His attack power was lacking and would only serve to end their transformations earlier, resulting in three more half-demons to fight.

One half-transformed demon was already very difficult to handle. They did not know if they could handle additional half-demons or if they would just be throwing their lives away.

But if they were to retreat now, they would have just scared the Black Fiend School away, resulting in the complete failure of their mission. If they allowed the Black Fiend School to disappear without a trace and conceal themselves once more, Liu Jing's painfully nurtured reputation would be thoroughly and irrevocably destroyed.

The thought of others looking upon him with contempt caused Liu Jing to feel winded and extremely depressed.

Han Li's exhortation had forced him to make a choice.

"Senior Martial Brother Liu, should we retreat?! The Black Fiend School is far stronger than we've imagined. If we're going to retreat, we must do it now or else it will be too late!" Senior Martial Brother Wang softly said after approaching hesitantly.

Liu Jing could clearly see cowardice from Martial Brother Wang's shifting gaze.

'Retreat? If I retreat now, then I'll appear just as cowardly!' Liu Jing thought with a bitter smile.

"Everyone, fly to the skies and protect me as I cast my magic. Let me deal with the three Blood Servants!" Liu Jing instructed.

At the same time, he thought, 'It seems I'll have to use my life-saving measure in this fight! Otherwise, I won't be able to win and

preserve my reputation!’

“Senior Martial Brother Liu, you want to deal with the Blood Servants by yourself?”

However, when the others heard Liu Jing’s words, they all looked at him in disbelief, causing Liu Jing to feel a bottomless ache in his heart. But still, his appearance remained calm. Without speaking, he flew directly to the sky on a magic tool as he solemnly retrieved a fire-red jade box from his storage pouch.

At this moment, Liu Jing had completely recovered his calmness as if he were in complete control. When the surrounding disciples saw this, they glanced at each other and felt slightly more confident as they followed after him.

A reluctant look covered Liu Jing’s face as he stared at the jade box in his hand. But soon after, his expression became resolved and he placed his hands on the box.

In an instant, the jade box shattered apart into miniscule pieces, revealing a peculiar talisman covered in red light.

A fire-red flame bird was inscribed on the talisman; it incessantly flapped its wings as though it was flying freely like a real bird. The bird’s glowing blue eyes even occasionally shifted.

The most astonishing fact was the scorching Qi the talisman emitted; it caused the temperature within thirty meters to

abruptly rise, leaving his allies parched from the scorching heat.

Song Meng and the others approached and saw the astonishing scene of the talisman unfold.

“Artifact Seal!” Song Meng exclaim upon seeing the talisman.

“No, this isn’t a common artifact seal. This is.... a true seal!” After seeing the talisman’s strange appearance, Senior Martial Brother Wang cried out as if he had just seen a ghost.

Those who knew of this “True Seal” were dumbstruck.

While this so-called “True Seal” was considered an artifact seal, it was completely different from a common artifact seal.

First of all, common artifact seals only contained a tenth of the original magic treasure’s might at most. However, a true seal defied this convention, allowing it to contain a third of a magic treasure’s might!

Secondly, true seals could only be refined with the bloodline of the magic treasure’s master. As a result, only descendants of this specific bloodline would be able to activate and make use of this true seal. If someone else were to attempt to use it, the true seal would destroy itself.

With such great benefits, there naturally had to be some significant disadvantages; otherwise, all the elders would leave

their later generations with only true seals.

While true seals contained several times more power than an ordinary talisman treasure, its greatest flaw was that it could only be used once. This single use would display the entirety of its might without restraint and leave no second use. As a result, it was far less practical than common artifact seals.

Additionally, there was another reason as to why so few true seals were passed down.

After a magic treasure went through the process of bloodline refinement in order to produce a true seal, the magic treasure would suffer permanent and irrecoverable loss in strength. After knowing these restrictions, elder cultivators felt it would be far better to leave behind several ordinary artifact seals for their descendants rather than ruining their own magic treasures which were as precious to them as their own lives.

Thus, many cultivators joked that there were several times more magic treasures in the cultivation world than true seals. Although these words were slightly exaggerated, they weren't far from the truth!

Chapter 323: Demon Execution

True seals were several times more difficult to activate compared to common seals. As a result of this, Liu Jing asked his fellow sect members to protect him as he did not wish to meet the same tragic end as his Junior Martial Sister. Finishing his instructions, Liu Jing protected himself using his yellow ring magic tool before he sat down cross-legged on his flying magic tool. With a calm heart, Liu Jing began to pour magic power into the fire-bird true seal.

As the fire-red talisman's glow gradually intensified in Liu Jing's hand, the inscribed fire-bird's wings became increasingly nimble and lively. It seemed as though the fire-bird would suddenly materialize and fly out from the talisman at any moment.

Although Han Li was engaged in battle with the Ice Demon on land, he felt at ease knowing that his fellow sect disciples were taking action. He had feared that his fellow sect disciples would cower and run away in defeat. If he were left alone, Han Li would be unable to obtain the item he desired from the Black Fiend School Master.

No longer worried about being deserted, Han Li wholeheartedly focused on the enemy before him. Even as a mid Foundation Establishment cultivator, the Shifting Smoke Steps still placed a significant burden on his body. Thus, he couldn't let this battle of extreme speed drag on; he had to risk an all out assault.

With that in mind, Han Li incessantly flickered about while brandishing a silver sword in one hand, suppressing the Ice Demon and leaving him winded. With Han Li's other hand, he silently

summoned an item from his storage pouch and wound it around his ring finger.

Killing intent flashed through his eyes; Han Li charged forward at a fearsome speed, sword grasped in both hands. He suddenly made a vicious attack, inspiring fear in the ice demon. The Ice Demon hastily fell back and raised his sharp crystal claws in defense.

Dāng. The ice demon coldly laughed. Taking advantage of the strike's momentum, the Ice Demon flew backwards and increased the distance between him and Han Li. At that moment, a slight sneer appeared on Han Li's face.

When the Ice Demon saw this, he felt extremely uneasy. Han Li let go of his sword with one hand and pulled.

In turn, the Ice Demon felt an indescribable force halt his retreat and could no longer avoid Han Li's fierce strike. At that moment, Han Li grasped the sword in both hands once more and expressionlessly moved to strike.

When the Ice Demon saw this, he turned pale and hastily started struggling with all his might. Unfortunately, it was already too late. In the blink of an eye, Han Li had already appeared before him. Han Li's sword blurred momentarily and countless silver streaks assaulted the Ice Demon as they flashed past each other. At the following instant, two figures appeared beneath the moonlight: Han Li standing with a sword in his grasp and the Ice Demon falling to the ground.

Having clearly seen this, Song Meng and the others couldn't help but feel extremely nervous.

The Ice Demon staggered to his feet and looked at Han Li's back with an evil grin. As he thought to say something, his expression suddenly froze.

The sound of a series of sharp ruptures could be heard, revealing countless fine cracks on the Ice Demon's transparent body. As the sounds continued, the cracks grew larger, eventually turning the Ice Demon's body into a pile of broken, translucent ice.

As the translucent crystals broke down, a complete undamaged claw weakly reached out with its sharp tips still emitting dense cold Qi. This was the only thing to survive Han Li's rapid cuts; it was also left completely unharmed.

Han Li dispassionately looked at the Ice Demon's remains. Then he turned his gaze toward the dazzling three light cocoons, wrinkling his brow.

He silently pulled his hand, causing the ice claw to fly toward him.

From the reflection of the moonlight, a thin transparent thread could be faintly seen between the sharp claw and Han Li. This was precisely the Ice Demon's cause of death.

Taking advantage of their close distance during the previous strike, Han Li had controlled the transparent thread on his ring finger to stealthily wind around his claw. Unfortunately, while the demon transformation left the Ice Demon's body transparent and strong, it had also dulled his senses, allowing Han Li to succeed in taking his life.

Han Li lowered his head to look at the ice claw, and after a moment of hesitation, he threw it away.

Since the ice claw was able to withstand his silver sword without harm, he understood it was certain to be exceptionally good material for refining magic tools. But with the knowledge that it was originally a person's hand, his heart shivered and he was unable to overcome his disgust.

He walked to the side of the Ice Demon's remains and casually slashed at the ice pile a few times with a silver sword, fishing out a storage pouch from within. After taking a quick look at it, he carefully put it away. He then silently flew to the sky, wanting to see how his fellow sect members would deal with the three transformed blood servants.

Han Li didn't know that during the moment that the Ice Demon had lost his life, a middle aged man in meditation suddenly opened his blood-red eyes and muttered to himself, "Ice Demon has already died? That's fine. It'll save me the effort of dealing with him in the future."

With that said, he calmly closed his eyes as if nothing had happened.

A shriveled corpse laid before him. From the clear outlines of the bone, it appeared that there was no flesh underneath the skin. The corpse was wearing the clothes of a Yellow Maple Valley cultivator.

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Han Li flew to the sky and before he opened his mouth, Song Meng and the others had surrounded him. With expressions of admiration and shock, they all showered him with praise. Their words even held a trace of reverence. Senior Martial Sister Xue Hong's pair cultivation partner was flushed with thankfulness toward Han Li.

Han Li said a few humbling words. He then noticed the blinding red talisman in Liu Jing's hand and curiously asked about it.

Someone immediately gave Han Li an explanation about "True Seals", causing Han Li to feel overjoyed and relieved.

Naturally, Han Li had heard of true seals before. However, he hadn't expected that Senior Martial Brother Liu would have such a treasure and would be willing to use such a critical life-saving measure.

Han Li hadn't known Liu Jing for long and had no way of knowing about Liu Jing's complicated dilemma over paying such a heavy cost to preserve his reputation.

In Han Li's case, he basically didn't care how others looked at him. So long as his own reputation didn't get in his way of his rewards, he didn't care.

Naturally, if Han Li had the opportunity to leave a good impression without expending much effort, he would be quite willing to do it. But to use something as precious as a "True Seal" in order to maintain his reputation, Han Li wouldn't be willing to do such a foolish thing even if he would be killed.

Even so, Liu Jing's action had truly left an impression on Han Li. He even doubted the validity of his long held belief. If there were those in this world that truly acted to exterminate evil, then what would that make him? Could he be considered a "good person"?

Just as Han Li was feeling slightly ashamed, he suddenly heard a ferocious roar filled with the desire of blood and massacre from below.

Han Li and company hastily looked down in alarm.

One of the three light cocoons had undergone a huge change, appearing as if the Blood Servant within was about to emerge.

Han Li's heart trembled. It seemed he would have to fight another Blood Servant in order to buy time for Senior Martial Brother Liu to finish!

With that in mind, Han Li started to take action but was

interrupted by a tranquil voice from behind him.

“Everyone, step aside. Allow me to eliminate those three demons.”

Upon hearing this, everyone revealed joy.

Han Li hastily turned around and saw Liu Jing looking at them with a smile. He had a small, exquisite red bird in his hand. It fluttered about and appeared extremely adorable. Additionally, the scorching Qi in the vicinity had disappeared without a trace at an unknown time.

‘That is the appearance of the true seal?’ Han Li looked at the small red bird with astonishment.

“Thank you very much for protecting me, everyone!”

Liu Jing flew to the front of the group in a relaxed manner. Under the gaze of the others’ amazement, he acted without the slightest hesitation and lightly blew at the small bird in his hand. With a clear chirp, the small fire-bird quickly flew forward from Liu Jing’s hand.

At that moment, a light cocoon beneath them had finished its transformation. Puchi. A demon wrapped in azure light emerged from its cocoon. Its shape was quite similar to the half-transformed Ice Demon however, its appearance was a deep azure.

From the demon's appearance, one could clearly tell that it was Daoist Priest Qing Wen. But at this moment, he appeared completely crazed as if he didn't possess the ability to think.

He let out two mad roars and raised his head to look at the small fluttering fire-bird. His body immediately grew still and the insanity displayed on his face was restrained, revealing an expression of great fear.

He then lost himself to panic and looked around him. He suddenly flew to the skies covered in azure light; it seemed he wished to escape.

But at that moment, a fierce explosion erupted from the small red bird, changing it into a large blazing bird about three meters wide. It spread its wings and traveled over thirty meters in an instant, appearing before the demon-transformed Qing Wen. With its sharp red beak, it lightly pecked at him.

Chapter 324: The Black Fiend School Master

The blazing fire-bird flew over twenty meters into the air and pecked at Qing Wen with its huge beak, turning him into a huge, plummeting fireball. When he landed on the ground, he only managed to wretchedly scream twice before turning into a pile of ash without the slightest resistance.

As Han Li watched on in complete astonishment, the huge fire-bird sharply cried out. Turning its head toward the two remaining light cocoons, it fiercely charged toward them. As a result, a huge pillar of fire erupted into the sky from the location of the cocoons. The two nearly-transformed Blood Servants were instantly engulfed in an ocean of fire.

The light cocoons were only able to bitterly resist the raging flames for a short moment before completely disappearing. The defenseless Blood Servants then silently swayed for several steps before completely turning to ash.

The blazing flame appeared extraordinary. Its unexpected ferociousness greatly shocked Han Li, leaving him with another memory of a Core Formation cultivator's magic treasure's might.

Apart from Han Li, his fellow cultivators all had expressions of pleasant surprise.

“That true seal is incredibly powerful!”

“We were able to eradicate this evil school all because of Liu

Jing!”

.....

The others excitedly spoke to each other in great excitement.

From their point of view, with the Blood Servants eliminated, all they had left to deal with was the Black Fiend School Master. As a group of many Foundation Establishment cultivators, there was no reason to believe that they wouldn't be able deal with a lone evil schoolmaster.

As Liu Jing saw the fire-bird's raging flames gradually disappear, he greatly lamented; but after hearing the other's praises, his spirits were raised!

“We've wasted quite a bit of time. Let's enter and exterminate the Black Fiend School Master!” Liu Jing waved his arm with a mighty, heroic air.

The others nodded in agreement and followed after him.

Han Li faintly smiled but as he was about to follow after them, he spotted Senior Martial Brother Wang blankly staring in some direction with a strange expression.

This somewhat surprised Han Li and he couldn't help but follow Wang's gaze. Aside from the white ash of the transformed Blood Servants and the pitifully arranged remains of Xue Hong, what else

could he be looking at?

“Senior Martial Brother Wang, did you discover something?” Han Li couldn’t help but doubtfully ask.

“No, no I didn’t discover anything. Junior Martial Brother Han, you are being overly suspicious!” When Senior Martial Brother Wang heard Han Li’s question, he immediately shifted his gaze before answering.

When Han Li saw this, how couldn’t he tell that something was strange? This person had certainly discovered something important but didn’t want to tell the others. Why else would he act like this?

Han Li became somewhat depressed but with a slight smile, he said, “Since it is nothing, let’s quickly descend. Everyone wishes to go in!” Pointing in the direction of the cold palace, Han Li wordlessly descended, leaving Senior Martial Brother Wang to be the last one remaining in the sky. Uncertainty and doubt fluctuating on his face, he eventually stomped his foot and helplessly followed after them.

As Han Li landed on the ground, he heard a lovely voice from the sky.

“Senior Martial Brother Liu, Junior Martial Brother Han, wait for us!”

After a moment of surprise, Han Li slowly turned his head toward the sky. When the others heard this, they stopped and looked in the direction of the voice with happy expressions.

Underneath the soft moonlight, Zhong Weiniang and Chen Qiaoqian were slowly descending from the sky with an extremely pale middle aged man in tow, suspended by his collar on the flying magic tool.

The middle aged man wore golden clothes and had a deathly pale complexion. When he saw Han Li and the others, he appeared to become even more panicked.

When Liu Jing saw them, he welcomed them with a slight smile.

“It seems that you two were able to smoothly succeed! So this is the Emperor of Yue!” After the two female cultivators landed, Liu Jing turned his gaze to the middle aged man and asked without paying much mind.

“That’s right! This guy was in meeting with a few officials in some hall. After Senior Martial Sister and I knocked out the officials and grabbed the Emperor, two Qi Condensation disciples rushed out in an attempt to stop us, but we were able to easily dispatch them. Senior Martial Brother Liu, it seems you haven’t encountered any problems either. That’s great!”

When Zhong Weiniang saw Liu Jing was completely unharmed, she incessantly chattered, expressing unmistakable concern for him. This caused Liu Jing to appear embarrassed, much to the

entertainment of Han Li.

“Junior Martial Sister Chen, are you also alright?” Two of Chen Qiaoqian’s Senior Martial Brothers asked cordially.

With an indifferent expression, Chen Qiaoqian confirmed this and swept her gaze past the group. When she saw Han Li, she stared at him for a moment before turning away with a complicated expression.

“Where is Senior Martial Sister Xue Hong?” Chen Qiaoqian wrinkled her delicate brow and asked with a feeling of foreboding.

When those words were asked, everyone’s faces sank, revealing a heavy expression.

“We lost Xue Hong in the battle.” With great difficulty, Senior Martial Sister Xue Hong’s Dao Companion said this with a voice full of sorrow.

As soon as they heard this, Chen Qiaoqian and Zhong Weiniang’s expressions instantly became unsightly.

Zhong Weiniang immediately became furious, saying, “How could you...”

However, she was only able to say half of that sentence before she was interrupted by a miserable cry.

Han Li and the others were frightened and immediately looked in the direction of the scream with great vigilance.

A blue-robed man had appeared near them at an unknown time. They saw his hand flicker with red light as he withdrew it from Senior Martial Brother Wang's chest. In the following moment, Martial Brother Wang's lifeless corpse then fell to the ground.

"I originally hadn't thought to kill you. However, children really shouldn't take what isn't theirs!" The blue-robed man said with a beaming smile. He appeared about forty years old and had a very fair complexion. With his slight wrinkles at the corner of his eye, he had a rather benevolent appearance.

With that said, he bent over and picked up a thumb-sized azure bead from the corpse, causing his smile to grow even larger.

After they saw this person, Liu Jing and Han Li's faces sunk at the same time, revealing expressions of extreme caution.

"Your esteemed self must be the Black Fiend School Master!" Liu Jing probingly asked with a thoughtful expression.

"Hehe, how smart! I truly am the founder of the Black Fiend School. So, you must be the leader!" The old man chuckled.

When they all heard that this person was supposed to be the Black Fiend School Master, even Han Li couldn't help but appear

shocked. Each of the Yellow Maple Valley cultivators then took out their magic tools as they faced this great enemy.

After Liu Jing's expression sunk, he deeply exhaled and suppressed the panic in his heart.

Soon after, he stealthily made a careful gesture to the others and coldly asked, "Correct. I am Liu Jing, the leader of this mission! I've come to exterminate your evil Black Fiend School. Even now that you are alone, you still dare to violently kill. You are truly courageous!"

Liu Jing said this awe-inspiring, righteous speech in a fearless display. Although he was very satisfied with his own performance, he became even more imposing as he continued.

So long as he eliminated this evil school's master, his name would reach even greater heights among the Seven Sects. In turn, others would look upon him with even greater reverence and admiration.

With that thought, Liu Jing's mind gradually became drunk with fervor, and he took out two silver hooks along with a ring.

Without waiting for the opposition to act, the Black Fiend School Master suddenly flashed a strange smile to him and softly whispered to Liu Jing in a voice only he could hear, "Then you can die!"

At that moment, Liu Jing felt a pain from the center of his chest. Without knowing what had happened, a blood-drenched arm had already pierced through his chest, revealing a round squirming object in its hand.

‘What is this?’ Liu Jing couldn’t help but think this in amazement. Perhaps he truly understood what happened, but he was unwilling to believe it.

Soon after, he felt the world spin around him and his vision turned black. He could still hear several shrieks and the mourning cries from his unrequited admirer, Zhong Weiniang. However, those sounds became increasingly unfamiliar and distant as time passed.

‘Sigh, this young girl really loves to cry!’ Liu Jing had one last, anguished thought before sinking into eternal darkness.

Han Li’s expression became very unsightly. Before the battle even started, the enemy had already killed two mid Foundation Establishment cultivators. Even Liu Jing, the leader of the group, had actually died so easily.

With hands stabbed through the corpses of Liu Jing and Senior Martial Brother Wang, Liu Jing’s attacker flashed toward the Black Fiend School Master’s side and flashed an evil grin toward them. This had happened so fast that Han Li had been unable to react.

After Liu Jing died, Zhong Weiniang was thoroughly stunned and was only able to release heart-wrenching screams. When Chen

Qiaoqian saw this, she hastily pulled Zhong Weiniang behind her in an attempt to protect her. She then looked at the attacker with a face filled with fury and remorse.

Chapter 325: Peculiarity

Thud. Thud. Liu Jing's and Senior Martial Brother Wang's corpses were casually tossed to the ground by the ambusher. The corner of Han Li's eye twitched when he saw this.

“Since you've come, don't think about leaving. I am still lacking Foundation Establishment blood sacrifices!” The ambusher smiled sinisterly, causing his white teeth to twinkle underneath the moonlight.

The ambusher was none other than the Emperor of Yue, who had appeared to be scared stiff just a moment ago. But now, he was no longer that sorry figure that lost himself to fear but a late Foundation Establishment cultivator with magic power fluctuations no weaker than those of the blue-robed man, the Black Fiend School Master.

Han Li's expression grew ice-cold in response to the sudden appearance of an opponent with such deep cultivation.

Han Li didn't know what technique the Emperor had used a moment ago, but he was able to completely conceal his cultivation from all of the Yellow Maple Valley cultivators. This reminded Han Li of his prior inability to detect magic power from the young prince and Steward Wang. Unlike the previous occasion, Han Li didn't perceive a queer premonition of danger, instilling him with even greater fear and caution.

Han Li flicked his finger, causing the white scale shield and the

tortoise shell magic tool to unhurriedly revolve around him.

As the Yellow Maple Valley cultivators nervously glanced at the Emperor of Yue and the blue-robed man, they took out their magic tools and closely wound them around their bodies, protecting themselves.

Seeing the Yellow Maple Valley cultivators act as if they were facing a great enemy, the Emperor of Yue and the Black Fiend School Master looked at each other and coldly laughed.

The Black Fiend School Master suddenly flashed, appearing over thirty meters away next to the sparkling ice pile, which were the fragmented remains of the ice demon.

The Black Fiend School Master glanced at the ice pile and casually held out his hand towards it, which caused a blue bead to fly from the ice demon's remains into his hand.

At that same moment, the treacherous Emperor of Yue flashed toward the two blood servants that were turned into ash by the fire-bird true seal. He fiercely slapped the ground, causing a golden and a yellow bead to fly from the ground and toward his hand.

“Those are...?”

When Han Li saw those beads, he drew a connection to the azure bead that was taken from Martial Brother Wang's corpse. He immediately came to a faint realization on what they were and felt

his heart tighten.

He truly didn't expect that his objective for coming here would suddenly appear before his eyes.

These were certain to be related to the "Five Elements Blood Cores" concerning Core Formation that the young prince had mentioned. However, there were only four such beads here. Where could the final one be?

At the same time Han Li came to this conclusion, the Emperor of Yue and the Black Fiend School Master beamed with joy, having gathered the beads.

Facing towards the sky, the group suddenly broke into laughter. As they continued laughing, they turned their cold gazes toward Han Li and company, revealing an unconcealed desire for murder. Han Li and company couldn't help but slightly pale in response.

"Everyone, take to the skies!" Thoughts suddenly surged through Han Li's mind before he finally shouted this and summoned his Divine Wind Boat, flying first to the sky.

The others were startled at Han Li's shout. But Song Meng and Xue Hong's Dao Companion, who held great confidence in him, unconsciously flew to the sky as instructed. However, when Chen Qiaoqian heard Han Li, she hesitated for a moment before dragging Zhong Weiniang along with her to the sky.

When the Emperor of Yue and the Black Fiend School Master saw this, their faces flashed with astonishment before sneering in unison. While it was clear they were two completely different people, the smiles they gave Han Li left him with the strange impression that they were one, causing Han Li's heart to tremble.

“That boy is quite quick-witted; it seems you'll have to sacrifice your body earlier than expected!”

“Me? Why not you? Once you take it, it will be irrecoverable!”

The Emperor of Yue and the blue-clothed man faintly spoke beneath them. Hearing their strange comments, Han Li and company felt a cold chill down their backs.

“Junior Martial Brother Han, what are they talking about!” Song Meng gulped and moved closer to Han Li..

Having seen so many fellow sect members die before him, even the battle obsessed Song Meng was unable to maintain his originally fearless drive. He asked Han Li in order to calm his heart. After all, Han Li gave him a feeling of mystery and slight reliability.

When Han Li heard the question, he bitterly smiled in his heart. As he was thinking of what to say, something occurred below them. Han Li's expression vastly changed and he immediately swallowed what he was about to say. Chen Qiaoqian then cried out, drawing Song Meng's fearful gaze to the scene below.

He saw the Emperor of Yue stick his hand into the Black Fiend School Master's chest. The Black Fiend School Master had held his arms wide and didn't struggle in the slightest; instead, he wore a smile on his face.

The Black Fiend School Master and the Emperor of Yue each emitted a dazzling bloody light. Through the Emperor of Yue's arm that pierced the Black Fiend School Master's chest, their bloody lights joined together and the light from the Black Fiend School Master madly surged into the Emperor of Yue's body. It appeared that the Black Fiend School Master had taken the initiative to deliver himself to the Emperor of Yue, leaving Song Meng dumbstruck.

The Black Fiend School Master's brilliance grew increasingly weaker and his flesh grew increasingly shriveled. Conversely, the Emperor of Yue's light grew stronger by the moment and even appeared slightly younger.

"What evil technique is this?" Song Meng cried out with shock.

Han Li's expression grew incomparably dark and he paid no mind to Senior Martial Brother Song's outburst. Instead, he took a deep breath and suddenly flung his hands outward.

No less than two hundred fire attribute talismans raced from his hands toward the Emperor of Yue and the Black Fiend School Master. This talisman barrage, consisting of fire serpents, fireballs, and other such fire attribute techniques, was made up of all the fire attribute talismans that Han Li had on hand.

Halfway through, these talismans turned into a heaven-shrouding display of fire attribute techniques, a huge and overbearing wave of fire. This grand display exerted an even greater pressure than that of Liu Jing's fire-bird true seal. Such a display of over a hundred talismans being thrown out was extremely rare in the cultivation world. After all, someone would have to spend hundreds of spirit stones to acquire that many talismans.

This mighty display left the group of Yellow Maple Valley cultivators in shock. Even the despondent Zhong Weiniang blankly stared at the scene in surprise. Initially, the Emperor of Yue was also greatly shocked at the scene. But after he saw they were merely low grade magic techniques, he brushed it off with disdain beneath contempt.

He understood that the bloody light protecting his body would leave him completely unscathed from those magic techniques, allowing him to pay attention to the important matter before him. So long as he finished this, killing the opposition would be as easy as throwing out trash.

But for an instant, palpitating fear could be seen in the Emperor of Yue's eyes as the flames that filled the sky surged down to submerge him and the Black Fiend School Master.

But as he expected, regardless of how deafening the attack, or how the flames soared, the bloody light surrounding their bodies kept them safe and sound. By then, over half of the Black Fiend School Master's light had flowed into the Emperor of Yue's body.

The Emperor of Yue now appeared about thirty years old, much to his pleasure!

When Chen Qiaoqian and the others saw Han Li's attack, they each followed up by sending down their magic tools. After all, it appeared the enemy was using some sort of evil technique and couldn't retaliate. Chen Qiaoqian and the others would naturally want to use this opportunity to beat down the enemy.

Just as they launched their magic tools, a blinding white light ruptured from the Emperor of Yue and the blue-robed man, followed by a deafening explosion. The fluctuating, volatile white light had enveloped the two within it.

The fearsome amount of spiritual power contained within the white light left the Emperor of Yue with an expression of fright. When Chen Qiaoqian and the others saw this, they were pleasantly surprised and looked to Han Li. This scene must've been the work of their fellow sect member.

However, Han Li didn't appear happy in the slightest and instead, appeared solemn and cold.

"You are all celebrating far too early! They still aren't dead!" Han Li coldly said with an indifferent glance. His words startled the others, causing them to hastily turn their gaze.

Underneath the concealment of the resulting smoke and dust, the Emperor of Yue's Spiritual Qi was still faintly discernable. Although it was still present, his magic power had been greatly

decreased.

The spirits of the Yellow Maple Valley cultivators shook from what they saw with their spiritual sense and they commanded their magic tools to spiral around them. Once the Emperor of Yue was visible, they would make a joint attack and get revenge for the tragic deaths of their fellow sect members.

“Ke... Good! Good! Ke! I truly made an error in judgement. Who would’ve thought that your esteemed self was the most troublesome among the group! You actually hid something among the talismans and managed to break through my protective blood light!” A burst of coughs came from the smoke, but as the Emperor of Yue gradually regained a steady voice, his tone became increasingly cold.

When the others heard this, their expressions massively changed. Han Li was also overwhelmed with shock.

“A Heavenly Lightning Seed! I truly did not think that there were Foundation Establishment cultivators capable of surviving a Heavenly Lightning Seed!” Han Li slowly said under his breath. He then waved his hands and a burst of white light appeared in front of him. Each of the silhouettes gradually became clear as the light faded; the silhouettes were various puppet beasts and soldiers all aiming at the ground.

After seeing the puppets appear, Song Meng and the others fiercely attacked the Emperor of Yue without hesitation. However, a burst of red light flashed and severed the magic tools’ connections to their owners. Covered in blood and filth, the

Emperor of Yue walked out of the smoke and rigidly stared at Han Li with bitter resentment.

Chapter 326: Blood Spirit Drill

Han Li didn't look at the Emperor of Yue's resentful gaze. Instead, he looked at the darkened bloody light that remained on his body.

A golden ruler, a pair of jagged purple blades, and a blue longsword floated within the bloody light. They were the magic tools of Song Meng and company.

At this moment, they were motionless within the bloody light. It seemed they had completely lost their spirit.

Han Li's eyes flashed with thoughtfulness; it seemed the devilish light protecting the Emperor of Yue's body was capable of corrupting common magic tools. The only item Han Li currently had on hand that could resist this evil technique was the Black Dragon's Claws.

Until now, the only person to appear from the cloud of debris was the Emperor of Yue. It appeared as though the blue-robed man, who had claimed to be the Black Fiend School Master, had truly died from the Heavenly Lightning Seed.

With that thought, even though Han Li's heart relaxed, he had no intention of giving the enemy an opportunity to catch his breath. Han Li immediately issued a mental order to his puppets to start their attack, launching an unending barrage of light beams and arrows toward the enemy.

Now fearful of losing even more of their magic tools, the group of Yellow Maple Valley Cultivators chanted incantations and formed hand seals instead, continuously throwing down magic techniques and talismans alongside Han Li's attack. They all understood that the only way to free themselves from this nightmare would be to strike with all their might. Otherwise, even more of them would suffer tragic ends.

When the Emperor of Yue saw this, he expressionlessly swept his arm in front of him. A huge shield of blood-red light appeared, easily blocking the oncoming attacks. However, the bloody light emitted from his body was becoming increasingly weaker and gave the impression that it might fail at any time. This caused Han Li and company to attack with even more fury.

The Emperor of Yue coldly snorted as he wordlessly took out a small dark green bottle from his bosom.

He nimbly tossed out a scarlet, longan-sized pill from the bottle that reeked of blood. It didn't appear to be any sort of good medicine, but he still threw it into his mouth without the slightest hesitation and threw the bottle away; it actually only held a single medicine pill.

Once the scarlet pill reached the Emperor of Yue's stomach, Han Li witnessed a shocking scene. The Emperor of Yue's expression shook and his bloody light became brilliant once more. In addition, his wounds were healing at a speed visible to the eye. In that short moment, Han Li watched as the enemy recovered all of his magic power and healed all of the wounds he received from the Heavenly Lightning Seed.

“Damn it! How could such a thing happen!” When Song Meng saw this, he muttered in disbelief, forgetting to throw out his tens of already prepared ice spikes.

Han Li also couldn’t believe his eyes. He didn’t know what pill the opponent took but it had heaven-defying effects.

He had read all sorts of ancient books, but none of them had mentioned something like this!

“He used a Cultivation Essence Pill. A life saving medicine pill that can only be refined after cultivating several particular devilish arts and by harming one’s own cultivation. This pill can only be used by its creator as it is fatal for anyone else who takes it.” A clear, cold voice came from Chen Qiaoqian’s side, leaving Han Li stunned. Even Chen Qiaoqian turned around with a faceful of surprise.

“Senior Martial Sister Zhong, you’re alright!”

“I’m fine! However, the demon that killed Senior Martial Brother Liu is before my eyes and I must kill him!” Zhong Weiniang had finally come to her senses. She smiled with great difficulty at Chen Qiaoqian, before saying this with a cold expression.

“We all wish to kill him. But the problem is that he wishes to do the same to us!” Han Li indifferently replied without turning his head.

Zhong Weiniang turned and looked below in surprise. What she saw suddenly caused her expression to become unsightly.

As they were talking, the Emperor of Yue, who was below them, withdrew his shield of light. The bloody light that surrounded his body surged and expanded until it was about ten meters thick. The magic tools that were trapped within the bloody light had then started to gradually melt away.

The radiance protecting his body was now several times larger and his cultivation was far greater than it was previously. As such, the bloody light on his body was now able to easily resist the assault of magic techniques and puppet attacks.

The Emperor of Yue raised his head to stare solely at Han Li with ice-cold eyes. He abruptly reached his hand out from behind him and grabbed at the air. A fire-red bead then suddenly flew out from somewhere and accurately dropped into his hand.

Seeing this, Han Li's eyes flashed with surprise as he thought of the blue-robed man that had died from his Heavenly Lightning Seed. It seems that this bead was from his remains and now the "Five Elements Blood Cores" could be considered complete. So long as Han Li could kill this fiend, he would be able to acquire this treasure that would greatly benefit his Core Formation.

"Boy, do you have any more Heavenly Lightning Seeds? If you have them, then I'll stand right here and receive them. I want to see whether your Heavenly Lightning Seeds or my protective

devilish art is greater.” The Emperor of Yue carefully put the bead away and said this to Han Li in a cold voice.

Once those words left his mouth, the Yellow Maple Valley cultivators were startled and couldn't help but look at Han Li.

Han Li's expression didn't change, but he inwardly snorted. He calmly replied, “This one is also quite curious whether you are the Black Fiend School Sect Master, or if that other person was. Furthermore, it appears from the current circumstances that your esteemed self had previously absorbed over half of his cultivation before you were interrupted! I am quite puzzled as there are rarely such people willing to act as a sacrifice in this world.”

Han Li didn't answer his question but asked a question in return. He returned derision with derision!

When the Emperor of Yue heard this, he revealed a strange expression that resembled both regret and mockery. But soon after, for some unknown reason, his face appeared increasingly menacing as his eyebrows became downward slanted.

Han Li's heart trembled and he opened his mouth slightly, quietly sending the four remaining Yellow Maple Valley cultivators a sound transmission that left them shocked.

Having finished that, Han Li then indifferently said, “Whether or not you believe my words is up to you!”

Han Li didn't use sound transmission for that last sentence, allowing the Emperor of Yue to clearly hear him. The Emperor's face grew cold, and he suddenly pointed a finger at Han Li, shooting a beam of red light as thick as a thumb toward him in an instant.

Although the red beam of light was astonishingly quick, Han Li was still barely able to cause both his white scale shield and tortoise shell to superimpose in front of him. Soon after, a barrier of blue light covered his body. Han Li didn't dare to be careless against this unknown attack.

Pupu. When Han Li heard this, he unconsciously leaned to his side, before feeling heat in his right shoulder, followed by acute pain.

After seeing a bleeding, finger-sized hole in his shoulder, Han Li's face became unsightly.

He licked his dry lips and turned his gaze toward his two magic tools with disbelief.

A similar, small hole appeared on the superimposed white scale shield and the tortoise shell; the red light had penetrated both of them without resistance. As for the Azure Essence Sword Shield on his body, it didn't have the slightest of effect. Upon contact with the attack, it completely dissolved without a trace.

What Han Li saw caused his heart to drop!

If his body wasn't nimble from his long practice with the Shifting Smoke Steps, then his heart would've been struck and he would've died immediately. A single moment of carelessness like this could cause anyone to lose their life!

The more Han Li thought of this, the greater the fear he felt.

Although he knew that the Emperor of Yue had absorbed a majority of the blue-robed man's magic power, the Emperor's drastic increase in strength was far beyond his expectations.

However, Han Li didn't know that as he was stricken by fear from his near death experience, the Emperor of Yue was even more amazed that Han Li had survived his strike.

Although it appeared that his last move appeared effortless to use, this "Blood Spirit Drill" was actually a single use move. Only after compressing one's true essence by several tens of times would one be able to unleash this surprise killing move.

This was one of the devilish arts' killing moves that he cultivated. Not only was the preparation for this unbearably painful, it also required far too much time.

When the Emperor had previously used this technique, not a single cultivator had managed to survive it. But now, Han Li was merely lightly injured from it; how could he not be shocked!

Only one Blood Spirit Drill remained within his body. He

hesitated, unsure whether or not to use it on Han Li once more.

When the Yellow Maple Valley cultivators saw that Han Li was injured from the recent attack, their expressions vastly changed.

Unconsciously, Han Li had already become their pillar of support. For him to be injured so unexpectedly greatly alarmed them.

“Go!” Han Li spit this out without the slightest hesitation after he shifted his gaze away from his wound.

He madly poured magic power into his Divine Wind Boat and swiftly flew off to the side.

When Song Meng and the others heard this, they gave each other a mutual glance before following Han Li’s orders to flee.

When the Emperor of Yue saw this, he was initially surprised, but then sneered soon after.

He flashed forward into the air, wanting to chase after Han Li. However, he now saw that over ten uniquely shaped puppets had surrounded him.

Chapter 327: Entering The Formation

“Get lost!” The Emperor of Yue yelled gloomily.

With a long whistle, the bloody light hurriedly enveloped the group of puppets. Then with a savage appearance, he chased after Han Li and company, disappearing in the blink of an eye.

After a short moment, the motionless puppets suddenly fell from sky. They were all broken into fragments.

Han Li arrived at the great formation he had set up. Having felt his puppets being destroyed from his threads of consciousness, Han Li felt very regretful. He then called out to the other cultivators to descend and enter the small bamboo forest.

As Han Li and the others hurriedly descended, the Emperor of Yue had already broken through the puppet encirclement and clearly saw Han Li and the others enter the bamboo forest. This greatly surprised and puzzled the Emperor of Yue but he inwardly rejoiced.

When he arrived above the bamboo forest and saw that Han Li and the others hadn't left, he sinisterly smiled and immediately waved his arms. A small chunk of his body's bloody light then separated itself from him.

Pupu. The bloody light flashed and fiercely shot into the bamboo forest. Midway, it suddenly enveloped the entire bamboo forest in a huge, shining red barrier.

Having seen the bloody light silently entrap the bamboo forest, the Emperor of Yue revealed a somewhat pleased expression. So long as this devilish light barrier firmly surrounded the bamboo forest, he would be able to use another secret technique to completely dissolve everything within it. Since the enemy had trapped themselves there, they had better not blame him for being merciless.

His hands formed a series of dazzling movements, the incantation gestures to activate the secret technique. As he performed these gestures, the bamboo forest was suddenly covered in a blue and white dome of light, that easily stopped the barrier of bloody light from further shrinking. After a moment of surprise, the Emperor of Yue's expression grew cold.

‘As expected, that group came here for a reason. They had even laid out a formation spell here!’ The Emperor of Yue thought with bitter resentment.

‘But this is nothing! How formidable can a hurriedly established formation spell be? At worst, I’ll just refine the people along with their formation! In any case, I cannot allow them to flee from the Imperial City.’ The Emperor of Yue thought resolutely.

With a plan in mind, he formed incantation gestures without restraint and immediately cast secret techniques.

The bloody light that had been stopped, then flashed with a brilliant radiance and attempted to further pressure their spell

formation. However, the bloody still had little effect.

But the Emperor of Yue didn't stop there. He shallowly cut at himself with his finger, sending off another chunk of bloody light to merge with the devilish light barrier.

The color of the bloody light barrier grew even deeper, faintly releasing the scent of blood. Anyone who smelled it would feel the desire to vomit!

Having seen this, the Emperor of Yue appeared slightly pleased. He repeatedly formed more incantation gestures with his hands and cast a series of magic techniques toward the bloody barrier.

The magic techniques shot into the barrier, causing the barrier to fiercely expand in every direction and its bloody light to become a richer crimson. The azure-white radiance bitterly resisted the increased pressure, appearing as if it would collapse at any moment.

The Emperor of Yue felt as ease after seeing this.

From what he currently saw, the deaths of the Yellow Maple Valley cultivators was only a matter of time and it was impossible for them to escape. However, the aftermath would be troublesome to deal with.

'It seems that I can no longer act as the Emperor of Yue. I'll have to conceal my identity and start all over!' The Emperor of Yue

thought regretfully.

As the Emperor of Yue was considering his possibilities in midair, Song Meng and the others were overwhelmed with fear inside the bamboo forest.

Having heard Han Li's sound transmission, the others quickly retreated to save their lives. With confidence stemming from Han Li's display of strength, everyone had decided to trust him without discussion. But none of them had expected that they would arrive at such an obscure bamboo forest and actually be trapped within such a dangerous situation.

Although a defensive formation spell was established at this location, they were surrounded by an impenetrable bloody light. In addition, this formation spell appeared to be on the verge of collapse. With imminent danger approaching, how could these people not panic!

"Junior Martial Brother Han, is this the defensive preparation that you had prepared?" Song Meng muttered this question without confidence.

"That's right. Is there a problem?" Han Li indifferently said, observing the circumstances before him.

In an instant, Song Meng's face turned extremely pale. The faces of Zhong Weiniang and Chen Qiaoqian's Senior Martial Brother also turned very unsightly.

Only Chen Weiniang looked at Han Li with a calm appearance. A strange appearance of thoughtfulness flashed through her eyes.

“Han Li, if you have any other methods, please speak of them. Don’t keep us in the dark! I am confident that you have other methods prepared, not just this magic formation!” Chen Qiaoqian suddenly said this in a calm manner.

The others were startled upon hearing this, and looked at Han Li with lifted spirits. From the caution Han Li had displayed during this night, there was no way that he would’ve made such a foolish move.

When Han Li heard this, he lowered his head in thought. He then faintly smiled to the others.

“Be at ease. Since I’ve brought my senior apprentices here, I naturally have something in mind.” He said with a calm expression, before patting his storage pouch and taking out a small purple flag. The flag was densely filled with incantation symbols and appeared to be an extraordinary magic tool.

“Is that a formation flag?” Zhong Weiniang asked with astonishment.

Formation disk and flag type magic tools were very rarely seen in the State of Yue.

“Senior Martial Sister is quite knowledgeable!” Han Li agreed,

lightly praising his Seventh Senior Martial Sister.

This greatly surprised the others and slightly strengthened their confidence. It seemed that Junior Martial Brother Han truly did have something else prepared.

Under their attentive gazes, Han Li held the small flag with both hands. The small, exquisite flag grew several times larger in the blink of an eye and faintly emitted a purple radiance.

Han Li laid the formation flag flat in his hands and softly muttered an incantation, before loudly spitting out the word “Swiftly!” at the end.

Woosh. The formation flag immediately shot off and could no longer be seen.

Han Li then took out three more identical formation flags from his bag and did the same thing, having them fly off in other directions.

After doing this, Han Li coldly glanced at the sky with an almond-yellow formation disk in his hands.

The formation disk was unremarkable and held no light. However, Han Li then solemnly held the disk flat above his head, causing it to lightly glow.

A thick beam of yellow light soared from it and into the sky,

striking the azure-white light barrier.

At nearly the same time, beams of gold, azure, red and blue light shot from the sky from four different directions.

Upon receiving the five pillars of light, the azure-white barrier that was on the verge of collapse immediately stabilized and the faint sounds of ocean waves could be heard from it.

The sounds above them gradually became larger and more frequent, eventually becoming the sound of unfettered thunder; those who heard it couldn't help but feel fear.

As the sounds grew louder, the appearance of the azure-white light barrier unexpectedly changed, becoming a barrier of rainbow light. Despite how the exterior red light attempted to collide with it, the new rainbow light barrier was like a reef below a stormy sea, completely unfazed.

Seeing this, Song Meng and the others grew at ease and realized that Han Li's formation was rather extraordinary. It seemingly would have no problem in preserving their lives.

The Emperor of Yue saw this strange scene and cast several devilish techniques in response. However, as his techniques had little effect against the colorful light beneath his red barrier, he felt that this matter was anything but good!

His stern, cold face flashed with hesitation and he wrinkled his

brow. Then, he abruptly stamped his foot and had the red light flow back to him in streams of various sizes. Then, he turned his body into a ball of red light without hesitation and flew off into the sky at a speed that would leave even Han Li ashamed.

Strangely, while this person flew off at great speed, he returned at even greater speed. It was unknown why he had returned despite attempting to flee.

The Emperor of Yue's face revealed an expression of disbelief as he attempted to fly off another eight times. However, he was unable to fly off more than a hundred meters away each time before obediently flying in a circle and returning to his original location. By this time, the Emperor of Yue no longer appeared bewildered; instead, his face was filled with terror.

Upon seeing this, Han Li laughed coldly while the others were wide-eyed and speechless. From joy and surprise, Zhong Weiniang had tightly clenched her fist, not noticing in the slightest that her long fingernails had dug into her flesh, causing her to bleed.

In addition to surprise, other, more complicated emotions had also surfaced on Chen Qiaoqian's face.

Han Li took out his tortoise shell and white scale shield and had them revolve around his body. Lacking the time to explain the secrets of the "Five Elements Reversal Formation," he said with a deep voice, "If anyone has a treasure talisman, use this opportunity to activate it. In a moment, we will launch a joint attack to exterminate him! Since he is already trapped in this great formation, he won't be able to quickly escape from it!"

Han Li's words were filled with great confidence!

Chapter 328: Black Blood Saber

Han Li's confident words along with the self-assured manner in which he sat down with his azure talisman, inspired Chen Qiaoqian and Zhong Weiniang to do the same. They took out red and yellow artifact seals respectively from their storage backs and silently sat down cross-legged to activate them.

Chen Qiaoqian's Senior Martial Brother and Song Meng looked at each other with a bitter smile. It wasn't as if neither of them had artifact seals. Although Chen Qiaoqian's Senior Martial Brother had his deceased Dao Companion's blue artifact seal, he was familiar with neither its power nor its usage. Naturally, he couldn't just take it out and recklessly use it. As for Song Meng's grey spear artifact seal, its power had been completely exhausted during the fight with the ice demon.

As a result, the two could only insipidly wait for the three and protect them.

At this moment, the Emperor of Yue realized that madly flying around like a housefly was ineffective and stayed motionless in midair.

After he lowered his head and momentarily muttered to himself, he sinisterly took off the golden crown on his head and allowed his long, disheveled hair to flow in the wind and cover over half of his face. His increasingly demonic and mysterious appearance contrasted with the bloody light emitted from his body.

He took in a deep breath and suddenly used a sharp fingernail to cut a cross on his wrist. Blood profusely poured out of the cut and merged with the bloody light on his body, causing it to suddenly darken, instantly turning it dark-red.

Although they were separated by such a large distance, the Yellow Maple Valley cultivators were still able to smell that bloody, vomit-inducing scent. Their faces slightly grimaced but they could only bitterly continue to look on as the enemy casted his magic.

Seeing that the color of his body's bloody light had finished its transformation, the Emperor of Yue opened his mouth, and spat out two streams of red Qi toward his wrist. This unknown magic technique immediately stopped the bleeding and caused the deep wound to gradually fade away. However, his complexion was greatly paled from the loss of blood.

With a stern expression, he took out a dull, jet-black hilt. The hilt was only half a foot long but it appeared extremely worn and completely unremarkable. From the way the Emperor carefully handled the object, it didn't seem to be a useless item but rather extremely dangerous.

As he rigidly stared at the hilt, he started to softly mutter an incantation.

The incantation was neither loud nor easily understood. But from its slow chant, a faintly savage Qi pervaded the air, which gave the others an impression of ancientness.

“What is he doing?” As he watched this from far away, Song Meng couldn’t help but ask with great surprise.

“I don’t know, but it’s likely that he’s using a formidable magic technique!” Chen Qiaoqian’s Senior Martial Brother said with worry. He was also unable to understand the words of the incantation.

Although the two didn’t understand what the enemy intended, from seeing him bleed himself, they knew that the Emperor of Yue had taken desperate measures and was giving it his all.

As the two restlessly watched on, the cadence of Emperor of Yue’s incantation grew quicker and that savage aura became progressively stronger.

As the Emperor’s eyes flashed with red light, an astonishing scene occurred.

The hilt suddenly burst out into a ball black light and floated in midair. It rose about a foot above his head before remaining motionless.

The Emperor of Yue grew increasingly cautious and formed strange hand seals one after another with exceptional skill. The bloody light on his body turned into strands of blood that hurriedly flew toward the floating hilt.

At the start, there were only several strands of black blood. But not long after, the threads of blood proliferated, becoming ten, several tens and finally over a hundred strands of black blood. Like moths to a flame, they all flew toward the hilt.

In an instant, the hilt was densely enveloped in the threads of black blood. After wriggling for a moment, the threads condensed into a large sphere of corrupt blood, thoroughly wrapping the blade handle within.

If one were to carefully look at this foul blood, one would notice a strange red radiance emitting from its otherwise dark appearance, leaving a demonic impression on one's soul.

When the Emperor saw this scene unfold as he formed hand seals, he revealed a happy expression.

He stopped his hand seals, intending to use a different technique. But as he did so, the sphere of black blood released a blinding black light and started squirming fiercely. Then, it started to boil and expand, appearing extremely unstable.

Seeing this, the Emperor's expression of joy was completely replaced with one of fear.

He frantically turned his head, looking in every direction, but when the Emperor once again laid eyes on the blood sphere, his face became misshapen by uncontrollable fear!

His expression immediately became full of certainty, and he spit out a few profound incantations with a soft roar. He then fiercely bit off the tip of his tongue, and sprayed a mouthful of foul blood along with a chunk of his tongue toward the deformed sphere.

Once the sphere of black blood absorbed this, it immediately stabilized and its dazzling radiance dimmed.

Still uneasy, the Emperor of Yue formed over ten rapid incantation gestures in a blur, leaving him out of breath. As a result, every bit of radiance from the blood sphere had disappeared.

Then, the Emperor finally let out a breath of relief. However, having previously spit out blood essence, his appearance had suddenly aged over ten years, becoming extremely haggard.

Despite that, he was currently unable to attend to this issue. Instead, he suddenly cut off a chunk of his body's bloody light and sent it over to the bloody sphere. At the same time, he chanted once more in a deep voice, but because he no longer had the tip of his tongue, his words were unclear.

The sphere of black blood gradually grew longer. Eventually, when the incantation was complete, the jet-black hilt appeared once more with a blade created from black blood as its saber's edge; this newly formed saber emitted an astonishingly bloody Qi.

Upon seeing this saber, the Emperor of Yue appeared to become mad with passion.

Without further hesitation, he reached out to grab the handle of this saber and casually waved it. Although he didn't reveal the slightest bit of its might, he still appeared to be extremely satisfied with it.

After taking a deep look at the saber, the Emperor of Yue let out a long, sharp whistle, turning himself into a huge sphere of black light along with the saber. After which, he suddenly charged toward the bamboo forest, causing Song Meng and company to feel greatly nervous.

But at that moment, Han Li opened his eyes and stared at the oncoming blood sphere with a cold gaze.

Although Han Li had been activating his artifact seal a moment ago, he had a clear understanding of his enemy's actions from his formidable spiritual sense.

Previously, as the Black Blood Saber had been taking form, Han Li's wandering spiritual sense had been strongly sucked in by the blade, which wanted to completely absorb it. With great fright, Han Li hastily withdrew his spiritual sense. Fortunately, the black blade's attempt to absorb his spiritual sense was autonomous and wasn't the doing of the Emperor of Yue. Thus, he was able to easily retrieve his spiritual sense from the black blade's grasp.

Still, this fearful event had left Han Li drenched in cold sweat. If his spiritual sense had truly been absorbed by that evil saber, the consequences would be unspeakable!

Although Han Li knew how fearsome the saber currently was, he remained completely confident in the strength of this hurriedly established “Five Element Reversal Formation”!

After all, even Lei Wanhe, a Core Formation cultivator, said that it would be difficult to break through his original “Five Element Reversal Formation”. Even without completely setting up this upgraded, stronger version of the formation, he was completely confident that a Foundation Establishment cultivator would be unable to break through it in a short amount of time.

Thus, although he had opened his eyes, his heart remained completely at ease.

As these thoughts churned through Han Li’s mind, the Emperor of Yue knocked against the multicolored barrier of light with great force. Zizi! The rainbow light barrier easily resisted the attacks.

The Emperor of Yue had expected this and evilly grinned. He then tightly grasped the Black Blood Saber in his hand and fiercely slashed at the rainbow light barrier.

With a sharp whistle, a huge streak of black radiance surged from the saber. Swoosh. The astonishing black saber streak, which was over thirty meters long, had chopped off a large portion of the rainbow light, creating a three meter wide gap.

When the Emperor saw this, he felt great joy and charged toward the gap without the slightest hesitation. With the incessantly

flickering black streak in hand, he had actually entered the rainbow light.

“No! This is far from good!” Song Meng immediately cried out in panic.

Although the other idle Senior Martial Brother didn't speak, he appeared far from okay, with an expression filled with worry.

“There is no need to be alarmed. That rainbow light is only the first layer of defense; this great formation isn't so easily broken!” Having heard Han Li's indifferent voice, the pair calmed down and faintly smiled.

Still, they were both greatly astonished that this Junior Martial Brother Han had enough leftover concentration, while activating his artifact seal, to pay attention to their conversation. How truly amazing!

The Emperor of Yue had immediately charged over thirty meters into the barrier of rainbow light and had clearly seen the Yellow Maple Valley cultivators beneath him. He was able to vividly see Han Li and two others activating their artifact seals.

He smiled sinisterly and flashed over ten meters, appearing over where Han Li sat. With a light wave of his Black Blood Saber, a black saber streak over thirty meters long chopped down.

Chapter 329: Exterminating The Enemy

When Song Meng and company saw the Emperor of Yue attack the cross-legged Han Li, their hearts grew shocked. Although they were aware of their inability to affect the saber's attack, Song Meng and company still raised their arms in defiance. In hopes of slowing down the attack, they unleashed a torrent of fireballs and threw eight talismans which transformed into huge stones.

Unfortunately, their attacks were of no effect; with a light swing, they were easily swept away by the saber's huge radiance and had completely vanished without a trace.

The saber streak changed direction once more and fiercely chopped down with vicious intent.

As Han Li saw the sharp saber streak about to strike him, his expression didn't change except for forming a slight sneer.

When the Emperor of Yue saw that Han Li was so calm, he was startled for a moment. Without thinking much more, he continued chopping down with the saber streak.

The Emperor struck at thin air, as Han Li had suddenly disappeared.

He discovered that he had returned to his original position at an unknown time, about a hundred meters above the barrier of rainbow light.

The Emperor of Yue's appearance became extremely unsightly, and he struck at the rainbow light while clenching his teeth. As the Emperor split open a hole and charged in, he saw Han Li indifferently gazing at him while still seated in his original position.

This time, the Emperor of Yue didn't impulsively charge down. Instead, his entire body trembled, shooting out a huge beam of bloody light with astonishing momentum. He immediately followed this up with a black saber streak.

Since the Emperor of Yue had prepared himself, he was able to clearly observe what followed.

When the bloody light was about three meters away from Han Li's head, it disappeared without a trace as if it had been swallowed by something. At that same moment, he felt his devilish light suddenly return to its original location above him.

The Emperor of Yue was astonished. Naturally, his following strike wasn't effective in the slightest. Once again, he was outside and high above the rainbow light.

The Emperor's face turned pale, revealing panic for the first time.

He no longer charged downward and instead continuously waved the demonic Black Blood Saber. Endless streaks of crescent saber light flew in every direction in an attempt to break through the

formation.

Not long after the saber streaks flew off, a flash of white light caused the attacks to shoot back towards their original location. He was flustered for a moment before furiously continuing his incisive attacks.

If the Emperor of Yue had been able to escape formation, he would have believed it contained a mere illusion technique and wouldn't have felt so anxious. If this were the case, he could easily break through this minor formation by relying on his devilish arts. But now that he was being teleported and his formidable attacks were being bounced back, he felt his heart plummet!

Only great formation spells known as the "Great Unbreakable Formations" would have this type of restriction.

Already perturbed by this abysmal turn of events, the Emperor of Yue felt a powerful surge of Spiritual Qi from the rainbow light barrier below him, causing his heart to tremble. He tightened his grip on the black saber and his bloody light hastily revolved around him, enveloping him in an impenetrable, blood-red whirlwind.

Another two equivalently powerful spiritual pressures surged from within the rainbow light. Soon after, the rainbow light hummed for a moment and opened a three meter wide passage.

A dense cloud of small azure rods swarmed through the passage and rushed toward the Emperor of Yue in a grand torrent. These

rods were from the azure rod artifact seal Han Li had just activated.

Closely following the cloud of rods, a small blazing sword and a yellow crystal ball flew out.

After the two exited the passage, they underwent a strange transformation. The small red sword grew incredibly large, and the crystal ball emitted a blinding yellow light.

Under Chen Qiaoqian's and Zhong Weiniang's control, the two artifact seals silently split into different directions, attempting to flank the Emperor.

As he watched these events unfold, the Emperor's face grew ashen. He madly flourished the Black Blood Saber in his hand and shot out eight huge saber streaks from within the whirlwind. With a sharp crackle of explosions, a majority of the small rods smashed into pieces upon meeting the attack.

Han Li's face turned slightly white. Because his mind was connected to the rods created by the artifact seal, he had suffered damage from the strikes.

This blood saber was powerful beyond expectation. But fortunately for Han Li, he didn't have to forcefully defend against its blows.

As for the Emperor of Yue, he was currently making his last

stand.

Even with the obstruction of the saber streaks, the small red sword, the yellow crystal ball, and the remaining swarm of azure rods were able to seize an opportunity to charge into the bloody wind.

A storm of sharp whistles immediately rose from within the whirlwind as countless bursts of azure, red and yellow radiance surged against the black streak in confrontation. It was clear that the struggle within was incomparably intense!

Suddenly, an abrupt yell of fury burst forth, accompanied by the sound of an explosion. The black, red, and yellow streaks of light all violently flashed for a moment before completely disappearing from the blood-red whirlwind. At that same moment, the complexions of Chen Qiaoqian and Zhong Weiniang paled and their eyes became spiritless.

“Seventh Junior Martial Sister, are you alright?” When Song Meng saw this, he hastily asked with concern.

“It’s nothing; his blood saber is just truly demonic. It was actually able to take down my and Zhong Weiniang’s artifact seals in mutual destruction. Now we will have to see whether or not Junior Martial Brother Han’s artifact seal will be able to kill him.” Chen Qiaoqian softly said. She took out two blue medicine pills, swallowing one and handing the other to Zhong Weiniang.

“Your artifact seals were destroyed?” When the other Yellow

Maple Valley Cultivators heard this, their expressions became astonished. In their minds, only magic treasures should be able to contest with artifact seals.

“Impressive! I suspect our enemy’s demonic saber is actually a ruined fragment of some kind of magic treasure.” After Zhong Weiniang swallowed the pill, her face became flushed and her lips reddened.

“The ruined fragment of a magic treasure? How is that possible?” Chen Qiaoqing asked with astonishment.

A series of earth trembling booms suddenly rang out from above them, causing them to hastily look up in surprise.

Separated by a thin layer of rainbow light, a great battle consisting of dazzling, chaotic bursts of azure and blood-red light was occurring above them.

After a short moment, the bloody light greatly lessened and was thoroughly overwhelmed by the azure light.

Afterwards, all traces of light had gradually disappeared, revealing the Emperor of Yue standing upright.

His face had a vacant expression and his lips were trembling much like a piece of porcelain about to collapse. The Emperor fell straight from the sky without resistance, and softly landed on the rainbow light above them; his body nothing more than a pile of

crushed flesh.

Having seen this, all of Han Li's fellow sect members were rapt with joy. Song Meng even went over to Han Li and excitedly yelled, "Junior Martial Brother Han! You've killed that monster! I knew you could do it!"

"I released the entirety of my artifact seal's strength in a single instance to break through his bloody light. Otherwise, it might've taken quite a while." Han Li faintly smiled and spoke with a content tone.

Being able to draw out such a great amount of an artifact seal's might in a single instance wasn't something that everyone could do. Only after using and seeing so many distinct artifact talismans did Han Li receive the experience to do this.

Although such an incisive method to take down the enemy greatly decreased the number of uses for an artifact seal, its power would explosively increase. Such a method proved extremely effective against powerful enemies!

Han Li had just comprehended this method a few days ago and was able to use this technique when it was least expected. As a result, he was able to deal the finishing blow to his heavily injured enemy.

Naturally, this artifact seal was fully consumed in the process and turned to ash.

At this moment, those “Fire Elements Blood Cores” were at the forefront of his mind. After saying a few words to Song Meng, he released two puppet beasts without any hesitation and had them directly head over to the Emperor of Yue’s corpse.

When the others saw this, they didn’t mind in the least. After all, the death of this enemy was almost entirely due to Han Li; naturally, no one would fight Han Li over the spoils.

Zhong Weiniang unexpectedly appeared somewhat pleased after seeing her sweetheart avenged and repeatedly expressed her thanks to Han Li.

She also said that when the fallen hear of this in the underworld, they would certainly be grateful that Han Li had avenged them!

Those words caused Han Li, who had come here with another objective in mind, to feel a bit embarrassed.

He hastily changed the subject and suggested that the others hurriedly search other areas of the Imperial Palace for any Black School Fiend Disciples that remained hidden. He also said that he had to stay behind and attend to a few matters, such as withdrawing the great formation.

Hearing Han Li’s words, how could the Yellow Maple Valley cultivators not understand what he had meant? He was clearly giving them the opportunity to loot the remains of the Black Fiend School’s nest.

Song Meng beamed with happiness while the others found it somewhat embarrassing. Han Li then said, “Let’s rendezvous after I finish putting everything in order. As for the Black Fiend School Master, he should have enough high quality items on his body to satisfy me!”

The others felt this was reasonable and did not further refuse. After all, everyone had suffered quite a bit from today’s great battle.

Thus, after Han Li withdrew the great formation, the others flew away on their magic tools.

Only when the others could no longer be seen did Han Li feel reassured enough to wave his two puppet beasts over. They flew back toward Han Li with the results of their search.

Chapter 330: Fiend Core

When Han Li saw that the “Five Element Blood Cores” were among the Emperor’s items, he was jubilant.

He immediately took them from the puppet beast’s mouth and closely examined them.

From the great spiritual power contained in the cores, Han Li verified that their medicinal properties were genuine. Relieved, Han Li took out an exquisite jade box from his storage pouch and carefully placed the five Blood Cores inside.

Han Li didn’t know the specific effects of the “Five Elements Blood Cores” mentioned by the young prince Xin. But from how urgently the Emperor of Yue had collected these items, their usefulness toward Core Formation should most likely be true.

Han Li then shifted his attention to the other items: a pitch-black alms bowl, an awl with an inch-long, blood-red spike, and a jade slip emitting a light-grey Qi.

Upon seeing these items, Han Li felt somewhat fearful of them.

These kinds of magic tools were commonly used by devilish and evil cultivators. It was likely that such items would have restrictions or curses placed on them, so he wasn’t in any hurry to fiddle with them. Instead, he took in a deep breath and covered his hands in a layer of faint azure light.

With this protection, Han Li was able to pick up the jade slip with his heart at ease, and carefully examine it.

Apart from releasing a strange aura, the jade slip didn't have any sort of obvious restrictions. Han Li let out a sigh of relief and slowly submerged his spiritual sense into the slip.

As his spiritual sense entered the jade slip, Han Li stood motionless. However, his expression underwent strange changes. First, he appeared pleasantly surprised, then dismayed and finally, extremely cautious with a slight trace of fear.

After the time it took to make a cup of tea, Han Li withdrew his spiritual sense and found himself in a daze.

The jade slip's contents went far beyond Han Li's expectations.

It contained information on all of the Black Fiend School's cultivation arts such as the young prince's "Black Fiend Asura Art", the four Blood Servant's "Fiend Demon Art", the Emperor of Yue's "Divine Blood Light" and so on.

Han Li was shocked to discover that all of these cultivation arts mentioned a book called the "Profound Yin Scriptures"; it seemed to be the origin of all these arts. This greatly piqued Han Li's curiosity.

But as Han Li hurriedly scoured the jade slip, he was unable to

find anything related to the whereabouts of the scripture.

With no other choice, Han Li could only bury his desire to find the scripture in his heart and focus his attention to some of the strange secret techniques.

A few of these greatly pleased Han Li. Not only did they resolve some of his long held doubts, but they also mentioned the true use of the “Five Elements Blood Cores”.

Han Li calmed himself and carefully examined the passage.

It turned out that the “Five Elements Blood Cores” were formed within the bodies of cultivators who practiced the “Fiend Demon Art”, much like how a demonic beast condense a core within their body. It was the most important aspect of the “Fiend Demon Art”.

The reason as to why they were able to turn into fiend demons and didn’t need to use Foundation Establishment Pills to enter Foundation Establishment was because of the formation of this core.

Although this “Fiend Demon Art” didn’t require the use of blood sacrifices, it still greatly increased the speed of cultivation. However, Foundation Establishment was the highest layer this cultivation art could achieve; there would be no hope of reaching Core Formation.

In fact, the rest of these cultivation techniques were more or less

the same and held the fatal flaw of being incapable of reaching Core Formation.

Of course, their speed of cultivation left others astonished through the additional assistance of blood sacrifices.

It seems these “Five Elements Blood Cores” were supposed to be a solution to the defects of these kinds of cultivation arts.

The jade slip also mentioned a secret technique called the “Fiend Core Technique”.

According to what was stated by the secret technique, even if one were a late Foundation Establishment cultivator with poor aptitude, so long as they consumed the “Five Elements Blood Cores” in accordance with the technique, there was a one-third chance of forming a “Fiend Core”. This “False Gold Core” would be similar to a genuine Core Formation cultivator’s gold core.

With the successful formation of a Fiend Core, while one’s strength would be inferior to a genuine Core Formation cultivator, the difference wouldn’t be that great. In addition, it would have the wondrous effect of extending one’s lifespan similar to genuine Core Formation.

When Han Li read this, his heart nearly jumped out of his chest. A one-third chance of forming a core? The “Five Elements Blood Core” was truly heaven-defying!

He immediately felt an urge to set everything else aside and consume the Five Elements Blood Cores!

However, a flaw later mentioned in the description of the secret technique had left Han Li astonished.

Since the “Fiend Core” was an artificial Golden Core, there was no possibility of further improvement. This implied that for the rest of one’s lifetime, there would be no way to further one’s cultivation and progress past early Core Formation Stage.

If it were only this, Han Li still wouldn’t allow such an opportunity to pass him by.

This was because the method the “Three Essence Revolutions Technique” used to form a core was truly unpredictable and unreliable. Even if he were able to scatter his cultivation three times, Han Li wasn’t confident it would work.

After all, this cultivation method was something created from the mere conjectures of the founder of the “Azure Essence Sword Art”! No one had ever successfully cultivated it before.

On the other hand, from the tone of this text, the “Fiend Core Technique” was certain to have previously been used.

A one-third possibility of Core Formation was extremely enticing to Han Li!

As for the inability to reach Nascent Soul Stage after forming a Fiend core, this matter was too far removed from Han Li's current situation for him to consider.

“Nascent Soul Stage” was still something Han Li could only dream about.

At the moment, being able to achieve Core Formation was his highest objective. As for whether or not he could extravagantly hope to condense a Nascent Soul, he would only think about it after he reached Core Formation.

But the following details of the “Fiend Core Technique” left Han Li dumbstruck.

It said that after the “Fiend Core” was formed in one's body, Fiend Demon Qi would be continuously released for a long period, and it would be capable of gradually eroding a cultivator's mind.

Although the erosion wouldn't leave one completely without mind or memories, decreased mental acuity along with gradually reduced intellect were unavoidable.

This caused Han Li's heart to tremble without end.

What Han Li was most confident of was his mind and quick-wittedness. These were the main reasons that he had been able to remain so free and unfettered in the cultivation world until now.

Thus, when he read that passage, Han Li had only a moment of internal struggle before completely severing any intentions of using the “Five Elements Blood Cores”.

After reading about the drawback, Han Li was extremely vexed. He had done so much to acquire the “Five Elements Blood Cores”, but it proved to be of absolutely no use to him.

After a moment of further consideration, Han Li felt that something was amiss.

If the drawback was so severe, then why would the Emperor of Yue specially cultivate these cores? That cunning old fox certainly wasn't going to directly consume it.

With that thought, Han Li looked through the secret techniques once more and his attention was caught by a very interesting secret technique — “External Reincarnation”.

This was a renowned top grade secret technique of the Devilish Dao; Han Li had heard about it long ago.

Although there were many techniques called “Reincarnation” techniques, the specific cultivation method and effectiveness of these techniques were exceedingly strange and varied. Regardless of the “reincarnation” technique, to a Devil Dao cultivator, they were all as precious as their own lives. They were all fundamentally the greatest secrets of each sect.

The Seven Sects of Yue had previously attempted to collect all the cultivation arts related to reincarnation but ultimately ended up empty-handed!

Han Li quickly read through this technique several times and grew rapt with joy. He had found a use for these “Five Elements Blood Cores” after all.

If he had guessed correctly, the Emperor of Yue must have had the same plan in mind. Thus, he had painstakingly cultivated those blood servants in order to condense those “Five Elements Blood Cores”.

As for the blue-robed man, the self-proclaimed Black Fiend School Master who had died from the Heavenly Lightning Seed, that was an incarnation he had refined.

Only that would explain why the blue-robed man was completely willing to allow his cultivation to be absorbed without the slightest resistance.

The distracting thoughts that Han Li had pushed to the back of his mind resurfaced as he read through the secret technique.

As for secret techniques such as the “Cultivation Essence Pill” and methods of blood sacrifice, since Han Li didn’t cultivate Devilish Arts, he had little interest in them.

Only the condensation method of the “Blood Spirit Drill” caught

Han Li's eye as he read on. He read through it several times and memorized it.

After Han Li withdrew his consciousness from the jade slip, he properly digested the information before moving on to the next two items.

The blood-red awl was the solidified form of the Blood Spirit Drill after leaving the body. It should be quite a useful magic tool.

As for the pitch-black alms bowl, it must have been the rarely seen magic tool, the "Soul Congregation Bowl". It was specialized in holding the souls of cultivators. Any soul that entered this magic tool would gradually lose its intelligence and become a feral, common soul suitable for refinement or control.

After only briefly examining this "Soul Congregation Bowl", the dark, cold Qi that the bowl contained caused Han Li to shiver and he hastily deposited it into his storage pouch. The magic tool's dark, cold Qi gave an impression that countless cultivators' souls must have been ruined within. The more he made contact with this bowl, the more ill he felt! Han Li clearly understood that without cultivating these kinds of dark arts, he would have no use for this magic tool.

The more he made contact with this bowl, the more ill he felt!

Chapter 331 : Orders

After carefully putting away the items he procured from the Emperor, Han Li looked up toward the rainbow light and quickly flew to a corner of the bamboo forest.

After a brief moment, Han Li arrived at a huge bamboo stalk with a formation flag stabbed into it and pulled the flag out.

The rainbow light barrier immediately disappeared without a trace.

Han Li smiled faintly and flew off to another corner of the forest.

Soon after, Han Li left the bamboo forest, having retrieved all of the formation flags and disks with exceptional care.

After experiencing the might of the improved “Five Elements Reversal Formation”, Han Li had come to value it far more than before.

When Han Li calmly walked out of the bamboo forest, something caught his eye: the pulverized corpse of the Emperor of Yue. It seemed that when the rainbow light had disappeared, the body had fallen onto the ground.

Han Li wrinkled his brow and let out a sigh. He then shot a fist-sized fireball toward the corpse, turning it to ash.

Han Li would have lamented if the ashes of such a remarkable character had been blown into the wind after death. As such, Han Li patted his storage pouch, and a streak of golden light flew out, blasting a large hole in the ground.

Han Li then lightly waved his sleeve, sweeping the ashes into the hole with a gentle gust of wind.

Suddenly, white light flashed. Just as Han Li thought to close the hole, he paused.

With amazement, Han Li beckoned with his hand, causing an embroidered cloth to fly from the ashes and into his hand.

“This is...” Han Li took a quick look at it with curiosity.

This embroidered cloth was slightly yellow and appeared to be ancient. He did not know what it was made from, but it emitted a faint glimmering light. Han Li suspected that the embroidery was actually an indistinct map.

Han Li’s curiosity was piqued and he hastily examined the map. After looking through it several times, he then lost all interest.

This was because after careful examination, it was certain to not be any terrain in the State of Yue as it was particularly unfamiliar. The drawing should be of a strange land. Furthermore, the cloth was clearly damaged and incomplete. He wasn’t sure if it was even half of the original map or merely a tiny piece.

However, since the map only appeared after the Emperor of Yue had turned to ash, it seemed he had used some sort of secret technique to conceal it within his body. Else, his puppet beasts would've found it from the start.

From this, it appeared that the map was extremely important!

Han Li pondered for a moment before deciding to store the badly damaged map into the jade box along with the Five Elements Blood Cores.

Now was not the time to unravel this mystery. He had to hurry and find the others.

After all, with the Emperor of Yue dead, the aftermath would be quite troublesome!

When Han Li found Chen Qiaoqian and the others in front of the Cold Palace, he was met with some unfortunate news.

They discovered Wu Xuan's corpse within the Black Fiend School Master's private room; he had recently died as a blood sacrifice and had his blood essence absorbed.

When Han Li heard this, he was startled. But then he smiled bitterly and remained silent.

Because of this matter with the Black Fiend School, many of his own sect's Foundation Establishment cultivators had died. When Han Li returned, his master, Li Huayuan, definitely wouldn't look at him favorably. After all, this matter was brought up because of him!

After wallowing in the feeling of helplessness, Han Li bluntly passed the responsibility of dealing with the aftermath to Chen Qiaoqian and Zhong Weiniang. He then found an excuse to return first to the Qin Residence.

However, Han Li completely had not expected that as soon as he returned, he would meet an entirely unexpected visitor.

“Greetings to Martial Uncle Han!” A middle-aged man wearing embroidered clothes saluted him.

“Martial Nephew Ma! Why have you come to find me so late? Has something important happened?” Han Li's eye's flashed with confusion.

Han Li, who had just returned from the Forbidden City of Yue, did not expect to find the disciple responsible for contacting the sect from Yuejing to be waiting for him in his courtyard.

Furthermore, it appeared the disciple had been waiting for quite a long time.

“Martial Uncle, this one has just received news of an order. All Foundation Establishment disciples must hurry to the Seven Sect’s main barracks at the border. The enemy has delivered a war ultimatum. In two months, the Six Devil Dao Sects will have a battle for supremacy with the Seven Sects of Yue. For this, all hands are to return to the battlefield. In addition, Martial Ancestor Li has sent a message to you!” The embroidered-clothed man solemnly said and handed a writ and jade slip over to Han Li.

When Han Li heard this, he was slightly startled, but he still maintained his calm expression as he took the two items and carefully examined them.

The writ’s orders were exactly as he had been told. All Foundation Establishment cultivators out on missions are required to assemble at the border camp within a month of receiving the writ and the date of the decisive battle had already been determined. The spiritual signature at the end of the writ was also genuine.

Having finished reading the writ, Han Li submerged his spiritual sense into the jade slip.

A hollow image of Li Huayuan appeared within and spoke very plainly. He merely instructed that Han Li no longer needed to protect the Qin Residence and that Han Li along with his other disciples were to return to the border. He had previously received information that the Devil Dao’s plan to infiltrate the State of Yue’s secular world and wreak havoc was canceled for some unknown reason.

When Han Li heard the few words of Li Huayuan's hollow image, he was vexed to the point of spitting out blood.

Han Li strongly suppressed the sullenness in his heart and withdrew his consciousness from the slip.

After a moment of thought, Han Li looked at the items in his hands and said, "Leave behind the writ and jade slip. I will inform the others about this!"

The middle-aged man hesitated for a moment before respectfully replying, "Then, I will have to trouble Senior Uncle!". He then took his leave.

Han Li didn't speak any further and watched as the middle-aged man departed. Afterwards, he softly exhaled and slowly returned to his room.

On the morning of the second day, Han Li and the others sat in the guest hall and discussed their departure from Yuejing.

"Before I can travel to the border camp and participate in the great battle, I must first pay a visit to my clan. Thus, I will not be able to travel together with you all." Not long after she read the writ, Chen Qiaoqian said this as she lightly bit on her lips.

"I must deliver Senior Martial Brother Liu's remains back to his clan." Zhong Weinang said with a haggard appearance and

slightly red eyes.

Although it wasn't explicitly said, all the others undoubtedly intended to travel alone as well.

"I have no plans, so I'll travel together with Junior Martial Brother Han." Song Meng was quite forthright and patted the shoulder of Han Li beside him.

"Fourth Senior Martial Brother, I can't! I also have a few personal matters to attend to." Han Li had previously made plans and declined Song Meng with a slight smile.

"Let's forget about it then!" Song Meng appeared very disappointed

"How about I accompany Junior Martial Brother Song?" Chen Qiaoqian's sole surviving Senior Martial Brother said to Song Meng with a smile.

Song Meng's spirits were immediately raised. Now, he would have someone to swap pointers with along the way.

When Han Li saw this, he couldn't help but inwardly laugh! He didn't think that after such a bloody battle, his Fourth Senior Martial Brother would stay completely the same.

With that, everyone agreed that on the morning of the next day, they would go their separate ways.

By late afternoon, Han Li had already informed Qin Yan that the danger had come to pass and he would be departing the next day.

Qing Yan revealed great happiness at the news, but hastily said a few words urging Han Li to stay as a guest. Han Li refused with a faint smile, so Qin Yan could only drop the subject.

After speaking with Qin Yan, Han Li returned to his residence.

But he didn't expect that in an unavoidable garden on the way back, he would encounter Chen Qiaoqian wearing a white skirt with her back to him.

As she was admiring the flowers, she just happened to be blocking his path.

Having seen this, Han Li was a bit surprised and found it embarrassing to silently pass by her.

"Senior Martial Sister Chen, what a coincidence!" Han Li found a casual encounter preferable to just passing her by.

However, Chen Qiaoqian suddenly straightened her back and turned around to face Han Li with an appearance as dainty as a flower.

"It isn't a coincidence! I was waiting for you here!" Chen

Qiaoqian spoke, slightly opening her almond-shaped lips.

With a complicated expression on her face, she stared at Han Li with her autumn-colored eyes.

“Waiting... for me?” Han Li looked astonished.

Although he did not know why, he felt both bitterness and joy in his heart.

After a moment of silence, Chen Qiaoqian spoke a few words that left Han Li astonished. “I heard that the White Chrysanthemum Mountains at the outskirts of Yuejing were gorgeous and one of the nearby marvels. Would Junior Martial Brother Han accompany me there to sightsee?”

“Sure!” Han Li had originally intended to refuse, but upon seeing the sorrow in her eyes, he had reflexively agreed. Was this the doing of the gods?

When Chen Qiaoqian heard Han Li agree, her face slightly blushed, revealing a happy expression; it complimented her incomparable beauty.

“That is great, Junior Martial Brother Han! Let’s go now. If we wait until after the sun sets, we won’t see anything.”

Chapter 332: A Once Familiar Place

Immediately after Han Li agreed to accompany Chen Qianqiao, he felt slight regret.

He had previously come to a clear decision to no longer be tangled with this woman. But now, he had agreed to accompany her for some unknown reason. It seemed he wasn't as determined as he had thought!

Han Li inwardly shook his head and replied, "Alright. Then how about Senior Martial Sister ride with me in my Divine Wind Boat. We'll be able to arrive there much faster!"

With that said, Han Li took out his spotless white Divine Wind Boat and invited Chen Qianqiao to ride with him.

When Chen Qiaoqian saw this gesture, she smiled sweetly and entered the boat without any objections.

After a moment of flight, Han Li brought Chen Qiaoqian to the Yuejing's famed White Chrysanthemum Mountain.

The mountain was covered with all sorts of chrysanthemums, a majority being white. The scene was truly mesmerizing.

Contrary to Han Li's expectations, Chen Qiaoqian didn't speak to him after arriving on the mountain. They merely walked along the small mountain path minding their own business. Only when they

occasionally saw a particularly breathtaking scene would they stop for a moment.

Han Li did not speak as he followed behind her, dispassionately gazing at her charming body without the slightest shame.

After two hours, Chen Qiaoqian had climbed to the mountaintop and stood on a small pavilion with Han Li to the side.

At that moment, no one was on the mountaintop aside from the two; not even a single traveler. As the two were unwilling to speak, it was extremely quiet.

It was unknown how long this subtle mood continued before Chen Qiaoqian broke it with a few faint words.

“Junior Martial Brother Han, after the great battle is concluded, I fear that I am going to be married off!”

Upon hearing those words, Han Li couldn't help but tilt his head and reveal an expression of astonishment.

“The groom is a direct lineage disciple of the great Qin cultivator clan, a disciple of Heavenly Imperial Fortress and a cultivator that has just reached Foundation Establishment! I've seen him several times and he seems decent. If nothing unexpected occurs, then he will marry into my Chen Clan and become my Dao Companion.” Chen Qiaoqian spoke calmly and turned a blind eye to Han Li's appearance of amazement.

After a moment, Han Li's astonishment gradually waned, and with some hesitation, he politely said, "Then I must congratulate Senior Martial Sister Chen on finding a suitable marriage partner! Junior Martial Brother will certainly prepare a gift for you later....!"

It became clear as Han Li started to speak, that Chen Qiaoqian had no intention of listening to his words; those were not the words she had wanted to hear. She trembled for a moment before releasing a disk shaped flying magic tool and flying off with a cold face.

After seeing Chen Qiaoqian disappear into the distance, Han Li motionlessly stood in place with a cold expression. After a long while, he let out a long breath and dispiritedly flew off.

Although Han Li had already made his decision about Chen Qiaoqian, he still felt at a loss when confronted with her interest to marry him.

This was perhaps a common flaw that all men possessed! Even if they were called cultivators, they had the same emotions as mortals.

Han Li mocked himself as he flew back to the Qin Residence.

After returning to the residence, Han Li learned from the others that Chen Qiaoqian had already departed, starting her journey early.

When Han Li heard this, he bitterly smiled in his heart. It seemed that he had greatly disappointed Chen Qiaoqian, and now, she was preparing her heart to marry someone else.

Although he was a tad depressed, Han Li wasn't of the normal sort. With an ordinary expression, he nodded his head and joked around with the others for a while longer.

Like that, the morning of the second day had arrived and the others left the Qin Residence. Han Li was the last cultivator to remain.

Before setting off on his journey, he went to secretly pay a visit to Mo Fengwu. After all, they were acquaintances and he wanted to bid her farewell.

But when he arrived outside her home, Han Li spotted Mo Fengwu through a window, causing him to change his mind.

This was because Mo Fengwu was accompanying an old woman of about fifty years old that was reading scriptures out loud. She appeared completely at peace.

After Han Li silently looked on for a moment, he ultimately decided not to disturb her. He turned around and quietly left.

Toward this particular girl, it may be better if he didn't meet her!

‘Perhaps living a peaceful life without being reminded of those painful memories is best for her!’ Han Li thought with melancholy.

Han Li then left Yuejing and first made a trip to Jia Yuan City. Since he had promised to avenge the Mo Estate, he figured that he may as well pay a visit and take a look.

Although the Devil Dao hadn’t come to stir trouble, he reckoned that Jia Yuan City didn’t currently contain any high level cultivators due to the upcoming great battle. He only had to secretly get rid of the Rainbow Sect’s Sect Master. Even if he angered a few Spirit Beast Mountain disciples, they wouldn’t be able to find out it was him.

In addition to causing trouble for the Rainbow Sect, he thought he’d take a look to see how Sun Ergou was managing the Fourth Level Gang.

He had left behind this back up plan several years ago, and now, he wanted to see if it still held any use.

With that in mind, Han Li rushed toward Jia Yuan City on his Divine Wind Boat.

The last time he was in Jia Yuan City was over ten years ago. However, many of the memories remained vivid in his mind and left a deep impression on him.

Five days later, a youth appeared in front of a long established restaurant in Jia Yuan City. This person stood on the side of the street and looked at the restaurant's sign with squinted eyes.

The person with the strange expression was Han Li, who had just entered the city. After standing there for a moment, he sighed and calmly walked in.

He went to the second floor and saw that the table by the window where he had sat at all those years ago happened to be empty.

Han Li happily walked over to it without the slightest hesitation.

Just as he sat down, a waiter politely wiped down his table and asked Han Li what he would like to order.

Han Li faintly smiled and ordered a few delicious appetizers, sending the waiter off to deliver his order. However, he did not come here just to satisfy his desire for delicious food.

With that in mind, Han Li turned his gaze outside the window.

The Mo Estate's huge residence still remained and it still had a burly man standing outside its gates. However, the huge sign on the gate no longer read "Mo Residence" but instead read "Li Residence" in large, golden words.

Looking at the "Li Residence" sign shining under the sunlight, Han Li unconsciously wrinkled his brow.

From what he had heard, the Rainbow Sect Master seemed to be surnamed “Li”. It seems they now occupied their defeated enemy’s nest.

Not knowing why, Han Li felt particularly bothered when he saw the sign saying “Li Residence”. He found the previous “Mo Residence” sign somewhat more pleasing to the eye.

As Han Li was lost in thought, his dishes were brought by the waiter and simultaneously the sounds of banter were heard on the floor below. Several youths wearing embroidered silk clothes walked up the stairs followed by their burly guards; they appeared to be the young masters of a noble family.

Among these young masters was a man so thin he might blow away in the wind. He casually swept his gaze over the floor and impolitely beckoned to the waiter.

The waiter complacently ran over and hastily said with an enchanting smile, “Young Master Xia, do you have any instructions?”

“Call for the shopkeeper. Today, we’re inviting an esteemed guest to dine with us. Have everyone on the third floor leave. We will pay for the damages.” This skinny man spoke quite arrogantly.

The waiter didn’t reveal the slightest bit of dissatisfaction, repeatedly nodding his head, before hurrying off to inform the

shopkeeper.

After a short moment, a forty year old man arrived. Once he saw the thin man, he immediately agreed to his request with a smile. He then brought the waiter to the third floor to apologize to the customers who were already there.

It was unknown whether this shopkeeper was naturally so quick and efficient or whether this young master had a truly great background.

Not long after, all of the customers on the third floor had paid their bills and left. Not a single one of them had dared to complain.

Han Li lazily looked over before he returned his gaze to the bustling streets outside the window.

The newcomer was only a young master among mortals, an arrogant person only relying on the might of his clan, commonly found at all places. Han Li had absolutely no interest in him.

At that moment, the youth in charge, Young Master Xia, then nodded with satisfaction and descended to the ground floor.

Later, the sound of footsteps came up from below. This time, Han Li was startled and couldn't help but turn his head around and stare.

This was because among those heavy footsteps, feather-light

footsteps could be faintly discerned. Only a Jianghu martial artist who practiced qinggong to a certain stage would be able to display such control.

This greatly piqued Han Li's curiosity.

Chapter 333: Gang Leader Sun

A refined and cultured youth was escorted by the young masters to the second floor.

The thirty-year-old youth had a dashing appearance. From seeing his faint smile, one would have received a greatly favorable impression of him as if they had felt a spring wind. Those near silent footsteps came from him.

The youth and the young masters were bantering with one another as they swept their gazes across the second floor.

As Han Li's common appearance did not catch their attention, they headed up to the third floor. It seemed that this youth was the so called "Esteemed Guest".

Just as they arrived to the third floor, a stream of servants carrying fine delicacies followed. Afterward the food was delivered, the servants and guards descended. It seems they didn't want others to hear their conversation.

Having seen this, Han Li's interest was piqued, and he secretly extended his spiritual sense upstairs, allowing him to clearly hear their conversation.

"Senior Brother Li, it is fortunate that you've come or else we would've suffered a terrible fate! You've given us face by agreeing to come here. Come, let us drink a cup in honor of Brother Li!" The thin youth's voice was filled with appreciation.

“It’s nothing. Those outsiders dared to seize someone underneath the eyes of our Rainbow Sect. Thus, they were violating our sect’s laws and I only did what should’ve been done.” The dashing youth courteously said; he appeared quite modest and friendly.

Hearing the words “Rainbow Sect” and “Senior Brother Li”, Han Li revealed slight amazement.

‘Could there be such a coincidence? I happened to run across someone related to the Rainbow Sect already!’

Han Li was stunned.

“Regardless of how it is said, we would’ve encountered great danger were it not for you. In the future, if Senior Brother Li requires any assistance, we will do our best.” A different young master said this as he patted his chest.

“Many thanks for these Brothers’ kind intentions! However, the person who attempted to kidnap you all must be a renowned character in Jianghu. Otherwise, he definitely wouldn’t have dared to act in a place like Jia Yuan City.” The dashing youth changed the subject.

“That’s right. Those kidnappers were quite ferocious. I had been sleeping in my bed but when I opened my eyes, I was already at another place. At that moment, I was truly scared. Fortunately, our elders managed to find your esteemed father. Otherwise, we would have suffered greatly!” The thin youth said, horrified of

what might have happened.

“In fact, Sir Wang and the others actually didn’t find...” The youth surnamed Li and the others continued to chat.

From the brief words Han Li heard from their conversation, Han Li was able to piece together a general idea of what happened.

These prestigious young masters had been kidnapped by a Jianghu expert. As such, their elders anxiously sought the Rainbow Sect for help. This youth should be the Rainbow Sect Master’s son, who had quickly come to their rescue. Now, a banquet was being held to thank this young sect master!

As Han Li appeared to be absent-mindedly looking out the window, he was sifting through the young masters’ flattery of the young sect master for any useful information regarding the Rainbow Sect Master.

Not long after, the thin youth paid some words of respect which caused Han Li’s heart to tremble with excitement.

“Senior Brother Li, I heard that Sect Master Li’s sixtieth birthday is coming soon. He is still hearty and vigorous despite his years and doesn’t appear old at all! Your estate should currently be making preparations in celebration of this event. At that time, we must drink a cup with him in his honor!”

“Hehe! Father’s cultivation is quite deep, incomparable to that of

ordinary people. If you all wish to come, then I will naturally welcome you. Furthermore, my father has returned from his sect branch inspections and is personally presiding over the preparations. That elderly man feels quite strongly about this birthday celebration.”

“Then...”

Having heard this, Han Li recalled his spiritual awareness. Since he found out that the Rainbow Sect Master was in the Li Estate, he didn't need to know anything else. Han Li then set down his cup of wine and put a few pieces of silver on the table, saying with a deep voice, “Waiter, I've paid the bill. Keep the change!”

With that said, he nimbly descended.

The waiter opened his eyes wide and repeatedly expressed his thanks.

After leaving the restaurant, Han Li gazed in the direction of the “Li Estate” with a trace of a sneer. The Rainbow Sect Master wasn't leaving anytime soon.

Once night fell, he would pay a visit to the Li Estate. If there were no Foundation Establishment cultivators nearby, he would be able to easily take the life of the Rainbow Sect Master and fulfill his promise.

But since it was still day and he was short on time, he thought

that he should take advantage of this opportunity to handle his other affairs.

With that in mind, Han Li disappeared into the bustling crowd.

The “Fourth Level Gang” held an impressive reputation within Jia Yuan City. Although they were incomparable to the largest powers, they were among the strongest of the mid level gangs. Their leader, “[Sun Ergou](#)”, rose to prominence in a single feat.

In Chapter 101, Sun Ergou had become his luggage carrier. After a series of events, he became his servant.

Naturally, as Sun Ergou’s status was now completely different, no one would dare to address him by name. If anyone saw him now, they would address him as “Gang Leader Sun”.

The Fourth Level Gang was no longer located where it had previously been, over ten years ago. It had relocated to a more prosperous street inside the city.

As for the gang members, they were no longer impoverished luggage carriers from the docks. Instead of fiercely working to make a living, they created great profits from their territory and had even built a restaurant, pawn shop and other such businesses.

As a result, the Fourth Level Gang had become increasingly wealthy and Gang Leader Sun’s quality of life had improved in kind.

As a matter of fact, Sun Ergou had married his ninth young concubine, a famous courtesan in Jia Yuan City, during the last month.

This young concubine truly knew how to seduce. After this middle-aged Sun Ergou married her, he had lingered in her room every day and had forgotten to leave. As for his other concubines, they had long been placed in the back of his head.

When it was still day, Gang Leader Sun would joyfully head over to her courtyard.

With one thought of that coquettish young beauty, he felt a heat in his heart that couldn't be quelled!

However, when Sun Ergou entered the fragrant room this day, he was immediately stunned!

As he entered, he unexpectedly saw a young man sitting in front of him. Once this man saw Gang Leader Sun Enter, he lazily said, "Sun Ergou, I hadn't thought that you held such skill! The management of the Fourth Level Gang is quite good. It seems I had chosen the right person!"

Not only did this youth address him by his full name, he also spoke to him in a superior tone. This youth was Han Li who had secretly infiltrated into the Fourth Level Gang's headquarters.

When Sun Ergou saw Han Li, he immediately recognized him as the person who had originally helped him that year. After all, Han Li looked exactly the same as he did ten years ago due to the fact that he had taken the “Face Setting Pill”.

This shocked Sun Ergou and caused a storm of perilous uncertainty to rage in his heart.

After a short moment of his expressions changing incessantly, Sun Ergou revealed a respectful appearance as he hastily stepped forward and saluted Han Li, “So it turns out that Young Master had arrived! Sun Ergou pays his respects to Young Master!”

This was quite difficult for the current Gang Leader Sun. He hadn’t spoken with a humble attitude for many years but was unexpectedly still able to do so quite skillfully.

Han Li raised his eyebrows and revealed surprise upon seeing Sun Ergou’s bearing. Quickly after, he faintly smiled and said with slight curiosity, “It’s alright! You’re a gang leader now. There is no need to be so courteous. My current visit is to see how you’ve grown. I’ll be leaving soon anyways.”

Sun Ergou immediately grew at ease. He had feared that he would have to hand over his authority! As he had held a high position for so many years, he knew a bit about cultivators and that mortals like him couldn’t hope to resist such characters.

Even knowing this, Sun Ergou was also aware that this person was extremely elusive. He had originally believed that Han Li had

given him such great benefits because he would have to act as Han Li's puppet. But he hadn't thought that Han Li would release his grasp and conceal himself for so many years. As such, Sun Ergou got a taste of what it was like to be above others!

He hadn't expected that this young master would suddenly reveal himself; he had believed that Han Li had completely forgotten about him.

As he didn't know Han Li's objective, he grew truly apprehensive!

"Yi!" Han Li looked at Sun Ergou with surprise.

"Come over here and let me see your wrist!" Han Li wrinkled his brow and gave an indisputable command.

Sun Ergou was startled. After hesitating for a moment, he obediently walked over and extended his wrist.

Han Li impolitely grabbed his wrist and poured a bit of Spiritual Qi into his body, quickly circulating it through his meridians.

After a short moment, Han Li released Sun Ergou's wrist with an indifferent expression and said a few words that left Sun Ergou pale from fright.

"A hidden poison has started to take effect in your body. At most, you have a month to live."

Han Li's voice was ice-cold and emotionless.

Chapter 334: A Strange Change

“Poisoned? That’s impossible. I am quite careful and have a specialist responsible for testing my food and drink!” After a moment of terror, Sun Ergou revealed an appearance of unease.

Hearing this, Han Li was too lazy to explain any further. With a wave of his hand, a streak of azure light flashed and flew into Sun Ergou’s body.

“Young Master! This is... wh-... what’d you...” Sun Ergou hadn’t dared to dodge, but was still alarmed.

“This is True Spirit Technique, it’s capable of visualizing the poison within your body. Go ahead and take a look in a mirror!” Han Li sat on a chair and played it down.

When Sun Ergou heard this, his heart dropped. Then he hastily ran to the corner of the room with a dressing table.

He hastily scoured the dressing table for a small mirror and then looked into the mirror with great caution. What he saw left him dumbfounded. He saw that his entire face was covered in blackish-purple Qi. From a single glance, he could tell he was severely poisoned.

“Young Master, please save my life! This one has remained faithful to Young Master this entire time and possesses no trace of disloyalty.” Sun Ergou rushed over to Han Li with an expression of fear and knelt while imploring Han Li to save him.

At this moment, he was almost entirely convinced!

As Han Li was a cultivator, it was impossible he would waste so much effort to deceive someone like Sun Ergou. If Han Li had truly meant him harm, he could've killed him with a flick of a finger.

After having seen this display of loyalty, Han Li faintly smiled and calmly said, "Be at ease. Although the poison is quite hidden, it's toxicity is weak. It won't be able to kill you in a few days. There is no need to be so fussed over nothing!"

Although Sun Ergou had calmed down a bit, he continued his pitiful pleas, "Young Master possesses great power. Please give this one a method to dissolve the poison so that I, Sun Ergou, may continue to serve you faithfully! If Young Master does not trust me then I can swear an oath under poison. This one..." Although Sun Ergou was now a gang leader, he was still very much afraid of death. Without even waiting for Han Li to speak, he took the initiative to swear his own oaths — much to Han Li's amusement.

'Serve me faithfully? It seems more like he has been receiving benefits without giving anything in return!' Han Li thought, not knowing whether to laugh or cry.

"This is a detoxification pill. After you take this, you'll be fine but just make sure that your poisoning does not continue." Han Li shook his head before tossing a blue medicine pill to Sun Ergou.

"Many thanks! Many thanks, Young Master!" Sun Ergou received

the pill with great joy and repeatedly expressed his thanks. He then quickly climbed up from the floor and properly put away the pill.

“This poison doesn’t affect one so deeply after only one or two exposures. It should have taken at least several months for it to get to this point! I believe that you should be able to find the poisoner. Surely you can do that at least; isn’t that right, my dear Gang Leader Sun?” Han Li lightly chuckled and said half-jokingly.

“Young Master teases! However, as for who poisoned me, I do have a few suspects in mind.” Sun Ergou rubbed the back of his head with a smile.

As his life had been just saved by Han Li, he was naturally now even more respectful towards him.

“En! As a cultivator, I can’t be too involved in the affairs of you mortals. I’ll leave it to you! The reason why I came here was because I wanted to see [Crooked Soul](#) and take him away. Now that I have quite a bit of cultivation, I shouldn’t have any problem bringing him along. Do you have any complaints about this?” Han Li’s smiled disappeared as he said this with a deep voice.

In Chapter 63, it is revealed that Crooked Soul is the refined corpse of his deceased best friend. Finding this puppet too heavy to carry, he leaves it behind to Sun Ergou in Chapter 125.

“Young Master wishes to take Sir Crooked Soul away? But Young Master, Sir Crooked Soul is no longer in the Fourth Level Gang.” When Sun Ergou heard Han Li’s tone, he incessantly complained in his heart, but he still had to summon the courage to reply.

“What do you mean? You lost him?” Han Li’s face darkened and the temperature in the room dropped several degrees, causing Sun Ergou tremble in fright.

“Young Master, please calm down! It wasn’t that I had lost him, but that Sir Crooked Soul had run off on his own. Although he is not in the city, he is not too far away, at a nearby mountain forest. I had sent a few people to follow after Sir Crooked Soul!” Sun Ergou explained at great speed, fearing that Han Li would act on his anger.

“He ran off on his own? What going on? Explain it clearly. If it isn’t as you say, then don’t blame me for coming back to punish you!” Although slight astonishment had flashed across Han Li’s face, he still managed to respond with a relaxed expression.

It was good enough that Sun Ergou knew about Crooked Soul’s whereabouts. But since Crooked Soul was only a walking corpse, Han Li found it hard to believe that he could have run away on his own.

Seeing that Han Li wasn’t angry, Sun Ergou felt relieved. Not daring to neglect him, he hastily explained, “Ever since Young Master had handed over Sir Crooked Soul to me, I have followed Young Master’s instructions to only use him as a last resort and to not allow others to see him.

“But an anomaly occurred six years ago with Sir Crooked Soul. That period of time was a crucial moment of expansion for my

gang and we were against a mid level gang with a great amount of experts. I had Sir Crooked Soul help me deal with them. During that battle, Crooked Soul had displayed great might and won our gang a decisive victory. But a few days after the battle had concluded, a subordinate I tasked with watching Crooked Soul suddenly came and reported that he had actually started talking. I was extremely astonished and rushed over with the ‘Soul Guiding Bell’. Then...”

Sun Ergou stopped there and bitterly smiled.

“What happened? Don’t tell me that Crooked Soul attacked you while still in possession of the Soul Guiding Bell?”

Having heard that Crooked Soul could speak, he was greatly astonished. But having seen that Sun Ergou had deliberately kept him in suspense, Han Li unhappily rebuked him.

Frightened, Sun Ergou continued, “He didn’t attack me. But before I entered his room, Sir Crooked Soul seemed to know that I had arrived; he suddenly broke the wall and ran away as if he was flying. I was completely unable to chase after him!” As Sun Ergou said this, he revealed an expression of helplessness.

“He ran away?!” With raised eyebrows, Han Li’s mind seemed to have wandered off into thought.

“That’s right, Young Master! Although Sir Crooked Soul has done this for several years, for some reason, he is still lingering at the boundary of the forest. Although I’ve tried several times to

find Crooked Soul and bring him back with the aid of my gang's experts, he was always unwilling to see me. Whenever I approached him, he would immediately flee. I had a few experts block his path, but nobody proved to be Sir Crooked Soul's opponent. Two of my gang's experts have even died." Sun Ergou said, perplexed.

"It isn't a great mystery! It's likely because of the Soul Guiding Compass that you carry! Although I don't know why control over Crooked Soul was lost, it seems the restrictions I originally put on him were still effective." Han Li coldly laughed before saying this with an indifferent expression.

"So it was like that!" Sun Ergou had appeared to be convinced.

It seemed that he had previously come to that conclusion as well.

"Tell me about Crooked Soul's whereabouts. I will deal with him later. As it seems that this matter isn't your doing, I'll have to personally go to see what had happened. Since you no longer have a use for the Soul Guiding Bell, give it to me." After a moment of thought, Han Li said this calmly.

"Yes, Young Master. My subordinates reported of Sir Crooked Soul's whereabouts two days ago. He is currently in the west side of..." Sun Ergou respectfully gave directions to a place about a hundred kilometers outside of Jiayuan City. He then carefully took out the "Soul Guiding Bell" magic tool and offered it to Han Li with both hands.

Han Li nodded his head and examined the magic tool for a moment. He then placed it in his storage pouch, having found that it was in good condition.

“In addition to Crooked Soul, I came here because I also had a few questions to ask you about the Rainbow Sect. You must answer me honestly!” Han Li’s face suddenly grew stiff; his voice once more becoming cold.

Han Li’s change in tone had clearly stunned Gang Leader Sun. After a short pause, he repeatedly nodded his head like a baby chick pecking grain.

“What kind of person is the current Rainbow Sect Master? What family does he have? Have any outsiders recently appeared in the Li Estate and have any of them remained?” Han Li fired these questions off with a stiff expression.

Sun Ergou felt his heart tremble, but he answered without the slightest hesitation, “As for the Rainbow Sect Master, this one truly doesn’t understand what sort of person he is. This one had only previously seen him at a distance and I only understand that his martial arts are unfathomable. With regards to family, he has two sons and a daughter; all of whom are married. I’ve heard that his eldest son is presiding over at the Rainbow Sect’s previous headquarters. His second son has followed the Rainbow Sect Master to the Li Estate and is presiding over that. I’ve also heard...”

Sun Ergou gave a very comprehensive explanation. It was clear that he regularly put forth great effort into gathering intelligence

on the Rainbow Sect.

As Han Li calmly listened, he unconsciously placed his hand on the table and started to tap; it appeared he was digesting the information.

When Sun Ergou saw Han Li stay silent for a moment, his heart stirred and he carefully asked, “Could it be because of that matter with the Mo Estate several years ago that you wish to act against the Rainbow Sect?”

Once Han Li heard this, his brow wrinkled as his face became gloomy.

“You speak too much! Don’t randomly ask about matters you have no right to know! Even more so, do not guess. You wouldn’t want to tragically become one of those poor souls who have lost their memories, right?”

Han Li’s ice-cold voice caused Sun Ergou’s expression to drop and he immediately begged for forgiveness.

Han Li snorted, letting the matter drop. One couldn’t afford to be polite when establishing authority.

Chapter 335: Astonishment

Seeing that Sun Ergou's face had broken out in a cold sweat, Han Li knew that his limit had been reached and prepared to give a few benefits to him.

“Enough. In the future, you can continue to act as Gang Leader Sun. If there is nothing that I need you for, then I won't be coming to find you. However, I must tell you that I do not know when we'll meet again. As such, you should take this and put it away. In the future, your descendants will be able to recognize me with this item. So long as your descendants are willing to serve me, I will protect their lives, wealth, and prestige.”

As Han Li said this, he took out a sheet of common blank talisman paper. Swoosh. He clearly tore it in two and handed one half to Sun Ergou while putting away the other.

When Sun Ergou first heard Han Li's words, he first appeared astonishment. Soon after, he appeared rapt with joy and knelt down in front of Han Li; he sincerely kowtowed, knocking his head three times against the ground. He then raised his head and earnestly said, “Many thanks for Young Master's great kindness! Young Master, please be at ease. My Sun Clan shall revere Young Master for many generations and will never renege on this agreement. Else, my clan may face extermination and calamity.” With that said, Sun Ergou kowtowed, knocking his head against the floor once more before standing up with a respectful appearance.

Han Li was somewhat startled from seeing this!

His original intention was to coax Sun Ergou. But he hadn't thought that with a mere promise, that he would be rendered grateful to the point of tears.

But after a moment of thought, Han Li came to a realization.

In the mortal world, the continuation of one's bloodline along with their clan's prosperity were most important! As such, it was natural for Han Li's guarantee of the prosperity of Sun Ergou's later generations to be met with sincere servitude.

After all, Han Li hadn't given Sun Ergou any unreasonable orders these past years. As such, he felt that having his descendents continue to serve Han Li was best.

With that figured out, Han Li felt quite happy. Having Sun Ergou handle his affairs sincerely instead of half-heartedly would be of much greater effect.

“Good. Since you've now sincerely paid allegiance to me, I will naturally leave behind a few good benefits. Take these two pill bottles. This bottle is filled with medicine that is used for the treatment of external wounds. So long as they still draw breath, they will make a full recovery. As for the other bottle, it is the same as the poison detoxification pill I gave you before and will cure all poisons under the heavens. These should help preserve your life!”

With a flip of his hand, two exquisite porcelain bottles appeared

in his hand and he handed them over to Sun Ergou with a calm expression.

Sun Ergou naturally felt grateful beyond words and would later strive his hardest.

Afterwards, Han Li gave a few warnings to Sun Ergou before having Sun Ergou respectfully send him off, flying away from the headquarters of the Fourth Level Gang.

‘This backup plan still continues to exist, but when will I next have a use for it?’ Han Li silently thought.

He was standing at the edge of a street and had turned his head to look around. He had just arrived at the Li Estate underneath the pitch-black night.

In an instant, his figure blurred and he flew toward the sky on a magic tool. Not long after, he was above the Li Estate.

Taking advantage of the curtain of the night, Han Li effortlessly descended from the sky and made use of several concealment techniques, noiselessly disappearing into the Li Estate.

With his previous experience of infiltrating Prince Xin’s Mansion, Han Li was able to skillfully restrain powerful “experts” with Soul Lock Talismans and use the “Soul Controlling Technique” to inquire about the Rainbow Sect Master’s whereabouts.

The result left Han Li quite happy. The Rainbow Sect Master was not in a heavily guarded location such as the back mansion and was instead located at his second son's residence. It seemed as if he was discussing a few matters with him.

After interrogating a servant in the side garden, Han Li turned him into ash with a fireball without hesitation.

Since this person had heard his questions and voice, he couldn't mercifully spare his life.

Soon after, Han Li slipped past layers of sentries and arrived at the front of a large courtyard.

What he saw left him surprised. Four white-clothed men were securely guarding the courtyard gate. Their temples were tense and their eyes attentively shot in every direction. They appeared to be extremely skilled martial artists.

Han Li wrinkled his brow. It seemed these were the Rainbow Sect Master's personal guard. As they were posted outside, it was likely that the Rainbow Sect Master was currently inside.

Han Li coldly glanced at the four guards and pondered for a moment. In a blur, he suddenly appeared in front of them.

The four white clothed men were greatly startled and immediately thought to act. However, Han Li's body grew blurry

once more and turned into four afterimages that simultaneously waved their hands toward the four.

Suddenly, the four guards silently fell to the floor as corpses. Each of the corpses had a glistening ice spike protruding from their hearts and were covered in a layer of white frost.

Han Li expressionlessly turned their corpses into ash with fireballs and arrogantly pushed open the gates, entering the courtyard.

On the way there, Han Li had already searched the Li Estate once through with his spiritual sense. He had found no cultivators, setting his heart at ease and kindling his desire to kill.

It seemed the Rainbow Sect Master would truly die by his hand.

Han Li had already made up his mind. Once he entered the courtyard, he would just kill everyone.

If he left behind any witnesses, Spirit Beast Mountain cultivators would investigate—a rather troublesome matter.

With that thought, he walked into the courtyard filled with the desire to kill. But when he clearly saw the scene there, he stopped in his tracks.

There was a young woman in the courtyard embracing a three year old girl and singing a lullaby for her. Although this woman

had lowered her head and he could not clearly see her face, her gentle, loving voice caused even Han Li to clearly feel the love the woman had for the child.

Such a scene was far beyond Han Li's expectations. The desire to kill had unknowingly disappeared from his mind and he now found himself in a difficult dilemma.

This woman was the Young Sect Master's wife. However, Sun Ergou hadn't mentioned that they had a young daughter!

Because Han Li hadn't concealed his movements when he entered, the woman knew someone had entered, despite not raising her head.

Eventually, she stopped singing her enchanting lullaby and unhappily said, "You're not going to speak? I had you wait outside so you wouldn't wake up my Yingzhu." With that said, the young woman coldly turned her head.

She had clearly considered Han Li to be one of those four guards.

After the young woman and Han Li saw each other's appearances, they both cried out in surprise.

"It's you?"

"What are you doing here?"

.....

The expressions on young woman's face continuously changed from clear and dark. Her beautiful face was covered in shock while containing a trace of bewilderment. She appeared as if she had been caught having an affair while in bed with another man; it was quite ridiculous.

Han Li did not find this funny in the slightest and his expression became extremely unsightly.

After a long while, Han Li lightly sighed away a breath of his melancholy and coldly said, "Should I address you as Senior Martial Sister Mo? Or would Mistress Li be better? What will it be, Mo Yuzhu?"

This young woman was actually the eldest among the three Mo Sisters. During that year, she had a majority of Jiayuan city's young master's head over heels for her, the peerless beauty of her generation that had no mind for others.

Although she was now dressed as a young married woman, her beauty hadn't faded in the slightest, still revealing an astonishing charm that would drive men wild.

Having heard Han Li's words, Mo Yuzhu's face became incomparably pale. She lost the strength in her legs and her body swayed, nearly causing her to fall on her backside along with her child.

“Yuzhu! Why do I hear an unfamiliar voice! Who are you speaking with?”

The people inside the house seemed to sense that something was amiss outside. The speaker’s voice sounded familiar to Han Li.

The house door opened, revealing an old man with white hair and a thirty year old youth.

During the day, Han Li had previously seen the Young Master Li at the “Fragrant Restaurant”. As for the old man, his hair was as white as snow and though his face was wrinkled and red, it gave an amiable impression. When he saw Han Li, his face appeared slightly strange.

“This person is the Rainbow Sect Master?”

Han Li turned his ice-cold gaze to the old man, asking Mo Yuzhu without a trace of politeness.

However, Mo Yuzhu could not speak. She was tightly embracing her young daughter, and was staring at Han Li with her mouth rigidly shut.

“Who are you? What did you do to my wife?” When the youth saw that an unknown young man was standing in the courtyard, he was stunned. But when he heard him call her Mo Yuzhu, he grew furious and charged forward, wanting to teach Han Li a

lesson.

However, before he had even taken a step forward, the Rainbow Sect Master stopped him and calmly said, “You are grown now but yet you so recklessly want to charge forward! This person was capable of silently charging through our expert guards. He is certain to be no simple character. Do not be spurred into taking action.”

As expected, this old man was quite capable! From the Rainbow Sect Master’s careful gaze, he was able to deduce that Han Li was not a common character.

If he truly was a Foundation Establishment cultivator, Han Li was certain to be very cautious and view him as a formidable opponent. Unfortunately, he was but a mortal with a sharp mind. In terms of absolute power, Han Li wouldn’t even put him into his eyes.

Chapter 336: Yingzhu

“Since Your Esteemed Self is standing here, it seems that you aren’t an unknown figure! May I ask if Sir is Yuzhu’s old friend? If this is true, then your esteemed self cannot be considered an outsider. Please, enter the room and chat with us.” The Rainbow Sect Master suddenly asked this with a chuckling smile; he appeared quite polite.

These words stunned the youth beside him, who revealed a trace of astonishment.

When Han Li heard this, his expression darkened, and his mouth formed a sneer.

“Many years ago, I had learned many skills under the tutelage of Mo Juren. This daughter-in-law of yours can be considered my Senior Martial Sister. Naturally, I cannot be considered an outsider. However, before we go and confuse our relationships, how about we first address the extermination of the Mo Estate?” Having seen Mo Yuzhu married off to an enemy clan, he felt gloomy after recovering from his astonishment and intended to act.

“You’re a survivor of the Mo Estate!” The youth cried out with an appearance of complete surprise.

The Rainbow Sect Master revealed astonishment, but soon after, his face darkened and his eyes grew indistinct. His body suddenly swelled without warning and gave off a grand pressure.

“Since you are a remnant of the Mo Estate, don’t think about leaving. Your life will remain here!” The Rainbow Sect Master loudly shouted, wearing a completely different expression.

He then made a large step forward with his hair fluttering about. Left behind in the bluestone that he stepped on was a two inch deep impression. It seemed this person’s power was quite shocking.

When the youth saw this, this wordlessly slipped to the side, planning on coordinating with his father’s movements.

Han Li expressionlessly looked at the father and son’s movements. Without saying anything further, he wordlessly raised his hand. Puchi. Several fist sized fireballs appeared above his hand, releasing a scorching air.

The Rainbow Sect Master had froze, halting his advance.

“Cultivator!” He hoarsely said with an expression of complete disbelief.

The youth at his side was also dumbfounded.

“Humph!”

Han Li didn’t intend to waste more words. He pointed his finger,

intending to kill the two with fireballs.

But at this very moment, Mo Yuzhu who was originally embracing her young daughter, appeared resolute. In an instant, she appeared in front of Han Li, blocking his attack.

“Don’t do it! I forbid you from killing this child’s father. If you kill him, then you must kill me and my daughter as well.” She said with a grieved expression.

Han Li wrinkled his brow. With a burst of loud crackles, the fireballs suddenly swelled to the size of bowls and became even more scorching. Although Mo Yuzhu appeared miserable, she still would not move.

“Cultivator, there must be a misunderstanding. Our Rainbow Sect...” Seeing that Mo Yuzhu was protecting him, he felt greatly moved and felt fear that Han Li would truly kill her along with his daughter in anger. Thus, he hastily mentioned their great backer.

Without waiting for him to finish Han Li coldly interrupted, “Shut your mouth! Neither you nor your father are in any position to speak. I know of your backer, Spirit Beast Mountain, but I don’t care in the slightest. If I hear you two speak again, I will exterminate your entire residence.”

The youth’s complexion became flushed and he didn’t dare to do anything else. He couldn’t help but look at his father with burning anxiousness.

Although the Rainbow Sect Master still appeared calm, his heart had sunk with worry as his son anxiously looked at him.

“Give me a reason why I shouldn’t kill them. This is revenge for the Mo Estate. Furthermore, Fengwu had personally requested this of me.” Han Li spoke to Mo Yuzhu with an indifferent tone.

“Fengwu is still alive? That’s great! I was always so worried! Only later had I realized that she had attempted to drown herself.” When Mo Yuzhu heard this, she revealed an expression of happiness.

“Not only Fengwu, but Fourth Martial Brother and Caihuan are also alive and well. However, I feel quite disappointed with you. I’ll give you a moment to convince me. Otherwise, I will be taking their lives.” Han Li said with an indifferent tone. He then raised his hand and caused the floating fireballs to disappear without a trace.

Having seen Han Li restrained from attacking, the Rainbow Sect Master and son let out a breath of relief. At the very least, their lives were preserved for a moment more. They feared that Han Li would not listen to Mo Yuzhu’s explanation as he was overwhelmed with fury.

As they had more knowledge of cultivators than ordinary mortals, their fear of them was far greater as well. They were fundamentally unable to resist them.

Mo Yuzhu’s expression also became relaxed, and after a moment

of thought, she spoke in a soft voice, “Junior Martial Brother Han, considering that you’ve traveled a far distance in order to avenge the Mo Estate on behalf of my father, I must first give you my thanks. However, I must ask Junior Martial Brother, for what reason are you moving to take revenge on my husband? He didn’t move to harm any of those from the Mo Estate. He had only given the order; an order not decided by him but by another party. As for who they are, Junior Martial Brother should know of them as they are also cultivators!”

Han Li grew startled and muttered to himself for a moment.

How could Han Li not understand what Mo Yuzhu said?

The main culprit of those who ruined the Mo Estate were without doubt, the cultivators of Spirit Beast Mountain.

How could Han Li afford to provoke such an enemy?

But what’s more was that Han Li could not believe the Mo Estate had created an enemy of such a degree.

With that in mind, he had only considered to vent anger for Mo Fengwu on behalf of their previous friendship.

If it was just that, it would have been fine.

After all, regardless of whether the Rainbow Sect Master and his son were innocent, they were still involved in the extermination of

the Mo Estate.

But now that Mo Yuzhu had appeared, married to this “enemy clan”, Han Li began to feel that his assumptions were amiss.

He could only let out a long sigh towards the sky. The Heavens do love making fools of men!

Since a member of the Mo Estate had an opposing view, Han Li naturally would not strain himself to perform such an undesirable task. Thus after a moment, he slowly spoke with a relaxed expression, “Senior Martial Sister’s words do hold reason. But regardless of how it is said, these two are complicit and killing them could not be considered unjust. What’s more is that once they heard I was a member of the Mo Estate, they had wanted to execute me. It is hard for me to be convinced that they had nothing to do with the extermination of the Mo Estate.”

With that said, his face was shrouded once more in a layer of cold frost, causing the Rainbow Sect Master and his son to appear fearful once more.

“However, since Senior Martial Sister is involved and the wishes of both sisters differ, I have no intention of becoming the evil one and will leave this to be disputed among sisters. I hope that when the time comes, you will be able to talk it over with Fengwu.” With that said, he passed on the whereabouts of the Mo Caihuan and Mo Fengwu to her.

Having heard this, the Rainbow Sect Master and his son now

realized that this cultivator had renounced his desire to kill them and couldn't help but sigh in relief.

The Rainbow Sect Master stepped toward with a grand smile, hoping to incur Han Li's favor. However, Han Li's ice-cold gaze caused the old man to shiver; he no longer dared to continue forward.

"I don't know what methods you used to marry my Senior Martial Sister off to your son, but I don't plan on investigating this irreversible affair. But from now on, you had best treat her well, otherwise..." Han Li did not finish his words but the threat was clearly heard.

"Junior Martial Brother, you misunderstand! I..."

Mo Yuzhu hastily thought to resolve this misunderstanding, but before she had finished speaking, the old man had interrupted her, "Sir Immortal, do not hesitate to be at ease. I will be certain to have Quanzi treat Yuzhu well. She will not be wronged in the slightest."

The Rainbow Sect Master was rather quick-witted, realizing that Han Li didn't want an explanation but a promise. Thus, he gave a sincere agreement.

Han Li nodded his head, expressing satisfaction.

Mo Yuzhu's eyes flashed with appreciation. After a moment of

hesitation, she gently handed over the young girl sleeping in her arms.

“Junior Martial Brother Han, since you are an Immortal now, please carry her! Her name is Yingzhu. Perhaps by touching Junior Martial Brother’s Immortal Qi, she will be bound to receive good karma.” Mo Yuzhu softly said.

Having heard the beautiful woman say this, Han Li was slightly startled. He then faintly smiled and wordlessly received the child, lowering his head to look at her.

The child possessed an innocent appearance lacking any evil: delicate facial features, and white, rosy skin. Although she was still very young, Han Li could faintly see a future Mo Yuzhu in the making.

The young girl still remained soundly asleep with a sweet smile, perhaps because she was too tired from her daytime playing.

Han Li strongly resisted his urge to pinch the toddler’s chubby cheeks. After a light sigh, he took out a misty white jade pendant from his storage pouch and gently placed it in the child’s grasp. He then passed the girl with the pendant back to Mo Yuzhu.

“This is Passing Spirit Jade. Although it isn’t some rare item, it remains warm during the winter and cool during the summer. In addition, bugs won’t dare to approach her. I’ll give it to her as a token of remembrance.” After going through several great battles, Han Li acquired many spoils of war. Not only did he receive all

sorts of magic tools, but he also acquired a few rarely found treasures; the Passing Spirit Jade being one of such treasures.

Chapter 337: A Concealed Expert, Crooked Soul

“As for tonight’s matters, I do not wish for Spirit Beast Mountain to know of them. You two should keep this to yourselves!” Han Li suddenly raised his head and coldly glanced at the Rainbow Sect Master and his son.

The old man’s heart trembled in fear and he remained silent with a humble appearance.

Han Li wordlessly stared at the Rainbow Sect Master for a moment. When he saw that the old man had broken out in a cold sweat, he revealed a smile and then his body blurred, disappearing without a trace.

While the old man was stunned, he felt a hand lightly pat his shoulder. His body immediately stiffened as he slowly turned his head.

Han Li was indifferently standing behind him.

“Does Sir Immortal have any commands? This old man will certainly follow them.” The Rainbow Sect Master said with an apprehensive smile.

“It’s nothing. I just wanted to give you a greeting.” Han Li replied with a calm expression.

“A greeting?”

The old man was startled, not fully understanding Han Li's intentions. But something soon came to mind and he hastily inspected his body with worry. Fortunately, he didn't find anything unusual and calmed down.

Han Li then released his Divine Wind Boat and appeared inside with a flash.

After giving a deep glance at the youth and the old man, Han Li coldly chuckled and flew off in a streak of white light.

The old man and his son were left completely baffled along with Mo Yuzhu.

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As Han Li flew on his Divine Wind Boat, he unconsciously sneered.

Although the old man had said that he didn't dare to tell Spirit Beast Mountain about him, Han Li saw something amiss from his expression.

Having seen this, Han Li naturally wouldn't ignore a deep

schemer who held hatred toward him, even if he was a mortal.

Therefore, when he had appeared behind him, he secretly took action and had a “Burrowing Worm” enter his body with a pat.

This insect was very strange. It was the size of a fine hair and was nearly invisible to the naked eye, only completely detectable through spiritual sense. So long as it entered the body, it would slowly crawl through one’s blood vessels and eventually reach the heart.

After one or two years, the infected party would start to experience heart pain and an inability to sleep soundly. The symptoms would grow increasingly severe over a span of several months until the heart pain surges, leading to death. It would appear no different than if he had died an ordinary death from heart problems. Even expert cultivators wouldn’t find anything wrong in the least unless they knew what to look for beforehand.

Since it would occur such a long time after Han Li had patted his shoulder, no association would be made to Han Li.

This unscrupulous and strange insect was something Han Li had acquired from the spoils of a Devil Dao cultivator. He initially had no idea what it was until he had someone else appraise it. Now knowing its purpose and usage, he had used it on the Rainbow Sect Master.

With this, he was able to fulfill his promise to Mo Fengwu without appearing evil in front of Mo Yuzhu. Han Li felt quite

pleased with himself.

Han Li currently no longer cared if they informed Spirit Beast Mountain that Han Li had been there.

After all, he hadn't harmed the father or the son in the slightest. Presumably, Spirit Beast Mountain wouldn't pursue him over such a minor affair. As for the Rainbow Sect Master's son, he seemed decent. Han Li hoped that Mo Yuzhu would have a happy life with him.

With that thought, he flew his Divine Wind Boat to the west of Jia Yuan City.

He wanted to hurry and resolve this matter of Crooked Soul's peculiarity. Although he didn't know what Crooked Soul was up to, he definitely couldn't just leave him alone.

West of Jia Yuan City was a tall mountain range filled with dense forest. It was said that poisonous snakes and fierce beasts roamed in these parts. As such, people would rarely tread in that region. This was most likely the main reason why Crooked Soul ran there after the peculiarity had arisen.

Han Li silently observed the densely covered mountain range from the sky.

After a long while, he took out the "Soul Guiding Bell" from his storage pouch.

He gradually poured Spiritual Power into the bell as he grasped it in his palm. A short while later, the Soul Guiding Bell glowed with faint white light and floated in the air.

“Go.”

After he threw the small bell, he formed an incantation gesture with his other hand and softly spat out his command.

The Soul Guiding Bell trembled for a moment before releasing a clear ring. It then flew off at great speed.

Han Li faintly smiled and chased after it with his Divine Wind Boat.

By using Crooked Soul’s blood essence that the bell contained, he was able to easily use the bell to track down where Crooked Soul was located. Naturally, he couldn’t do this if the bell was too far away from Crooked Soul. If Crooked Soul was over five hundred kilometers away, Han Li would be powerless to act. But now that the bell had responded, Han Li grew happy, knowing that Crooked Soul was concealed nearby.

The small bell flew straight for about fifteen kilometers before suddenly descending. When Han Li saw this, he knew he had found his objective and immediately grabbed the small bell in midair. Then, he completely covered the small, glowing bell in a layer of azure light.

From Sun Ergou's words, Han Li knew that Crooked Soul could now sense the Soul Guiding Bell. By concealing the bell's aura, he could avoid having Crooked Soul flee.

He quietly descended on a small mountain's peak and started to sweep his gaze in every direction.

Although it was already dark, Han Li was still able to vaguely see as he was a Foundation Establishment cultivator. As a result, he headed straight towards the direction in which the small bell had originally descended, into a large pile of stones on the mountaintop.

Han Li walked without the slightest sound as if he was a ghost. From Han Li's measures, he had ultimately caught Crooked Soul completely unaware. Crooked Soul was sitting cross-legged on a huge rock in meditation as if he were refining Qi.

Hidden behind a rock, Han Li secretly watched Crooked Soul with complete amazement.

Han Li was able to feel Spiritual Qi within Crooked Soul's body. His Spiritual Qi fluctuations indicated that he was at the fifth or sixth layer of Qi Refinement, leaving Han Li stunned.

Han Li had clearly remembered that [Zhang Tie](#) was originally unable to cultivate the "Eternal Spring Arts" because he didn't have spiritual roots.

Han Li's friend and fellow disciple of Doctor Mo who was later refined into Crooked Soul.

‘Wait! Although Zhang Tie was unable to cultivate the Eternal Spring Arts, that didn't mean that he didn't possess any spiritual roots. It only meant that he didn't have wood attribute spiritual roots. Could it be that Zhang Tie possessed spiritual roots of another attribute?’ Han Li thought, suddenly coming to a realization.

‘What were the odds! Doctor Mo was actually able to accept two disciples with spiritual roots when a person with spiritual roots couldn't normally be found among ten thousand mortals.’

With incredulity, Han Li continued his thoughts, ‘It is truly unfortunate. Because he didn't have similar attributed spiritual roots, we ended up with completely different fates. If I happened to not have wood attributed spiritual roots, then would I have ended up...” Han Li felt a trace of lingering fear in his heart.

“However, how did Crooked Soul acquire a foundation cultivation technique he could use? Could it be...?”

Han Li seemed to have thought of something and wrinkled his brow. His eyes flashed with malicious intent, but he continued to silently watch Crooked Soul cultivate.

After the time it took to eat a meal, Crooked Soul opened his eyes. He stood up and stretched his limbs.

His eyes displayed intelligence as if he truly possessed consciousness.

But when Han Li saw this, his face only appeared gloomier and his expression held a faint trace of maliciousness.

“Today’s progress wasn’t bad! It seems that in four months, I won’t have to be afraid of the magic tool that controls this body.”

As Crooked Soul revealed happiness, he heard an ice-cold voice from his side.

“It seems that your esteemed self is quite satisfied with that body!”

“Who is it?”

Crooked Soul’s expression turned cautious as he hastily looked in the direction of the voice.

At this moment, Han Li walked out from concealment with an icy expression.

“Who are you?”

“Yi! You’re a Foundation Establishment Cultivator!”

When Crooked Soul discovered that he was unable to see through the depth of Han Li's cultivation, he couldn't help but reveal fear.

“That's what I wanted to know. Why did you occupy and steal that body? That is the body of my close friend, and I personally handed it over to my subordinate for safekeeping. You've occupied that body for so many years, so how about you give me an explanation?” Han Li calmly said.

“This body is yours?” Crooked Soul revealed doubt as his eyes continuously shifted about. It was clear that he had some sly plan in mind.

When Han Li saw this, he coldly sneered. He suddenly flipped his hand, revealing the Soul Guiding Bell.

“What are you doing?” When Crooked Soul saw Han Li move, he immediately jumped ten meters back like a frightened hare; he then stared at Han Li with a face of vigilance.

Although he had previously felt the existence of the Soul Guiding Bell, he did not know its specific form. He also didn't know that the small bell was a magic tool that specialized in controlling his body. He had only believed that Han Li had taken out a magic tool to casually act against him.

Chapter 338: A Forced Confession

Han Li didn't pay any mind to Crooked Soul's alarm and scattered the azure light that enveloped the Soul Guiding Compass. Dāng. Han Li tapped his finger against the bell, causing it to lightly ring.

Thud. Just as Crooked Soul thought of using this opportunity to escape, he fell to the floor on his back.

"A life origin magic tool! You have the life origin magic tool for this body!" Crooked Soul shouted with fear.

"It's good that you know! If you don't want to suffer then you had best give me an explanation of your origins. I am quite curious. How were you able to invade this body? Aren't cultivators unable to possess the bodies of mortals?" Han Li asked with a calm expression and a flat voice as if he were chatting with a close friend.

When "Crooked Soul" heard this, he couldn't help but tremble. Cultivators that possess bodies were loathed in the cultivation world. While it isn't to the degree where they would be exterminated on sight, they absolutely wouldn't be looked upon favorably. With the addition of Han Li's strange behavior, he couldn't help but feel perturbed while vainly dreaming of escaping.

"Fellow Daoist, please forgive me. I was previously a Foundation Establishment cultivator, but I lost my body in a war against an

enemy clan. As a result, I had no choice but to occupy this body.” Instead of answering Han Li’s question, he stood up and gave this explanation with a smile.

“Really?” Han Li indifferently commented.

In truth, Han Li was somewhat surprised to hear that he was a Foundation Establishment cultivator.

However, when Crooked Soul was unable to make out Han Li’s thoughts through his indifferent appearance, he couldn’t help but become scared and hastily plead, “Although this one’s cultivation had dropped to the low levels of Qi Condensation, I still retained a few magic tools and spirit stones. So long as Fellow Daoist doesn’t pursue this matter, I would be willing to gift them to you!” He had spoken humbly; he clearly understood that he had no choice but to yield while under Han Li’s control.

However, Han Li didn’t pay attention to his seductive words and asked after a moment of contemplation, “Are you a cultivator of the Seven Sects?”

Han Li appeared to have casually asked this. According to his knowledge, very few Foundation Establishment cultivators existed outside of the Seven Sects within the State of Yue. Only a few large cultivation clans would possess a number of Foundation Establishment cultivators, the Yan Clan for example.

“Seven Sects... Ah, yes. I am a cultivator of Spirit Beast Mountain. Could it be that Your Esteemed Self is also a Seven

Sect's cultivator?" Crooked Soul said these words calmly, but Han Li was able to spot a trace of fear within his eyes, causing Han Li to feel great suspicion.

"So it turns out that Fellow Daoist is from Spirit Beast Mountain! How is Young Mistress [Han Yunzhi](#) doing?" Han Li asked with a faint smile.

A recurring character. She was first introduced in Chapter 137 when she sold Han Li the Golden Sincerity Brush. He later meets her once more at the Trial by Blood and Fire. She mentioned her name in Chapter 203.

"Han Yunzhi... I am truly sorry. This one had been in secluded cultivation for so many years and thus has no recollection of the younger disciples." After being surprised momentarily by Han Li's question, he made a forced laugh and self-mockingly said.

"You aren't familiar with her? Then how about Fellow Daoist tell me the names of a few disciples that you do remember. This one knows many Fellow Daoists from Spirit Beast Mountain. Perhaps I might know a few!" Han Li flatly continued with his close questioning.

"This..." Crooked Soul appeared somewhat panicked and began shifting his eyes in every direction. His expressions were more honest than his words.

Seeing that this person had failed to answer, Han Li's expression grew dark and cold.

“Fellow Daoist, you truly disappoint me! You are still hesitating and now I must force you.” Han Li said bluntly. With a blur, his body flashed forward and back.

Crooked Soul remained motionless in his original location. However, a “Soul Lock Talisman” was now attached to the center of his chest, removing any opportunity for him to act. With a panicked appearance, he hastily shouted, “Fellow Daoist, what is the meaning of this? We can talk about this...”

When used on mortals, a Soul Lock Talisman was capable of completely locking down their bodies to the point where they wouldn’t be able to speak. But when used against cultivators who possessed magic power, its efficacy was somewhat lacking. Although there were other methods to immobilize weaker cultivators, there were few that left them capable of speaking and expressing emotion.

At this moment, Han Li paid no mind to any of his shouts and took out a pitch-black alms bowl from his storage pouch.

Once it appeared, a sinister Qi filled the air, causing the nearby temperature to drop several degrees. Shortly after, the alms bowl released a ghastly wail and surrounded itself with a strange black fog, causing its ghostly aura to thicken. This was the “Soul Congregation Bowl” that Han Li had recently acquired.

Single-handedly grabbing the magic tool, Han Li ominously glared at Crooked Soul as he approached him.

As Crooked Soul stared at the strange alms bowl, he appeared bewildered. But he then immediately thought of something and his expression became nervous. He forced himself to say, “What do you plan on doing? Don’t tell me you plan on using a soul refinement technique?”

When he said the words “Soul Refinement Technique”, his eyes revealed extreme fear.

The “Soul Refinement Technique” was a notorious, fear-inspiring magic technique in the cultivation world. Some cultivators would even swear death-oaths under threat of this wicked magic technique.

All of the sects and great clans have specialists that would learn this technique in order to deliver the harshest of punishments to set an example for traitors. This practice had gained it much infamy due to the cruelty involved.

It was said that practitioners of this technique were capable of extracting one’s soul and using specialized magic techniques to torment them. Rumor has it that direct suffering inflicted on a soul for even a short moment was unbearable even to those with adamant wills. Furthermore, the stronger the cultivator’s soul, the greater suffering they would feel. These gruesome details would cause cultivators’ faces to pale when they spoke of them.

Rumors of the Soul Refinement Technique have spread all across the cultivation world. The best known among them was the rumor that cultivators capable of the Soul Refinement Technique were able to cultivate a “Soul Tool”, a tool inseparably linked to their

own souls. Only with such a magic tool would the user be able to fully utilize the Soul Refinement Technique and damn the target's soul to suffer a fate worse than death.

Not many cultivators had personally seen a soul tool, but it was said to release a dense, sinister and ghostly aura. Its description closely matched the appearance of the “Soul Congregation Bowl”, a magic tool that had held the souls of over a hundred cultivators.

Thus, with the threatening appearance of the alms bowl and Han Li's previous threats, this person had mistakenly believed that Han Li was capable of using this “soul tool” to perform the dreadful “Soul Refinement Technique”.

It was no surprise why he thought this. When someone thought of soul torture, the first thing that came to mind was the Soul Refinement Technique. How could he not have been scared out of his wits?

When Han Li heard Crooked Soul's words, he remained expressionless despite the surprise he felt.

In fact, Han Li hadn't thought of using the “Soul Refinement Technique” to threaten him. He only wanted to use the dark, icy Qi of the alms bowl to submit his soul to a bit of suffering. But now that Crooked Soul believed that Han Li was capable of using the Soul Refinement Technique, Han Li was prepared to take advantage of his misconception.

“I'm going to ask you one more time. Tell me about your origin

and why you have impersonated a Spirit Beast Mountain cultivator.” Han Li coldly responded with a question of his own, not bothering to answer whether or not he intended to use the Soul Refinement Technique.

Han Li’s evasive answer caused this person to be more convinced of his previous assumption. With a distressed expression, his lips trembled but no words came out.

Seeing this, Han Li didn’t continue to talk nonsense. Instead, he started to vaguely mutter an unknown incantation and moved the Soul Congregation Bowl closer to Crooked Soul’s face.

With regards to the alms bowl’s sinister Qi, even Han Li, a Foundation Establishment cultivator, coldly shivered upon contact with it. As a Qi Condensation cultivator, Crooked Soul would be affected far more strongly.

Thus, as the alms bowl was placed in front of him, he felt his body break out in a strange, extreme chill as if needles of steel had pierced through the depths of his soul and frozen it stiff.

After a short moment, he was no longer able to endure the pain and screamed with a twisted expression.

“Don’t be so hasty, I haven’t even used any magic yet. Then, the pain will be a hundredfold more!” Han Li suddenly whispered these fleeting words in his ear.

“A hundredfold?” When Crooked Soul heard this, he nearly lost himself to fear.

He was unable to endure the current pain for even a short moment. To endure a hundred times the pain would cause his soul to disappear in anguish. Having suffered, Crooked Soul was completely certain that this was the rumored, “Soul Refinement Technique”.

Thus, when he saw Han Li form an incantation gesture, he hastily changed his words to avoid further pain, “Fellow Daoist, please forgive me. I will speak. Please put away your soul tool and refrain from using the Soul Refinement Technique!”

Because of the penetration of the alm’s bowl’s cold Qi, he stuttered, repeating his words as he shivered. Were it not for the protection of the Spiritual Qi in his body as well as the extreme strength of Crooked Soul’s body, he would have long been frozen stiff.

“Had you been so tactful earlier, you could’ve avoided a bit of pain!” Han Li casually moved to put away the alms bowl and spoke as if Crooked Soul had been the one to bring this upon himself.

In fact, he inwardly let out a sigh of relief.

Because he wouldn’t talk, Han Li put away the Soul Congregation Bowl shortly after. This was also because Han Li was no longer able to endure the cold, dark Qi of the magic tool, having directly held it in his hand.

When Crooked Soul saw that Han Li had truly put away the magic tool, he took a deep breath.

“It would be best if you didn’t think of deceiving me. I will naturally be using magic techniques to test the truth of your words. I hope your esteemed self isn’t so stupid as to keep your secrets. Otherwise, I will scatter your soul and ensure that you will never reincarnate.” Han Li spoke with a tone colder than ice.

Having just suffered greatly, Crooked Soul involuntarily shivered and his expression became extremely unsightly upon hearing those words.

Chapter 339: Astonishment

“I am...”

“Your esteemed self had better avoid calling yourself a rogue cultivator. Otherwise, I’d feel inclined to distrust you!” Han Li expressionlessly interrupted him.

Crooked Soul bitterly smiled. It appeared that as he was still unresigned, he had thought to say as such.

As a result, after some slight hesitation, he dispiritedly said, “It is as Fellow Daoist suspects. This one has an unusual identity; he is not from the State of Yue...”

“You aren’t someone from our State of Yue?” Upon hearing this, Han Li’s face revealed a fraction of the shock he felt in his heart.

“I was actually a Controlling Spirit Sect cultivator from the State of Tiandou.” Crooked Soul slowly said.

“The Devil Dao Controlling Spirit Sect!”

Han Li couldn’t help but narrow his eyes and stare at him with a gaze as sharp as a sword.

“That is correct. I arrived at this place several years ago but I hadn’t expected that one of your country’s cultivators would ruin

my mystic body and reduce me to this state.” As Crooked Soul spoke about the destruction of his body, he wore a helpless expression.

After a moment of thought, Han Li asked with raised eyebrows, “Your body was damaged six years ago?”

As Han Li’s voice was calm, Crooked Soul was unable to make out Han Li’s interest. He honestly replied, “That’s right!”

“After you took possession of this body, you hadn’t thought of returning?” Han Li calmly asked.

“This one had naturally wanted to do so. But it seems your esteemed self doesn’t understand much about our Devil Dao.” Crooked Soul’s face continued to appear helpless.

“What was the matter? Although I know a few things about the Devil Dao, they are only bits and pieces from rumors.” Han Li openly admitted.

“Our Devil Dao is particular about how strength is truth and how the weak are just prey for the strong. Only with strength would one be able to enjoy authority. Originally, my position at the Controlling Spirit Sect wasn’t low. I had a dainty, pretty Dao Companion and a few obedient disciples. But now that my cultivation has greatly diminished, those things would no longer be mine if I returned. My position would most likely be coveted by my fellow disciples and fall to a hidden scheme.” Crooked Soul explained with a cold smile.

After hearing this, Han Li wrinkled his brow and remained silent.

Crooked Soul continued, “This one’s cultivation was lowered to this stage because he took possession of this body. Thus, this one is confident that he will be able to restore his cultivation within forty years and will be able to openly return. What, did Daoist Friend believe that I wished to remain in this backwater place where even birds don’t go to shit?”

“From what you’ve said, you haven’t encountered any other cultivators while you hid nearby Jia Yuan city?”

“None. Daoist Friend is the first cultivator from the State of Yue I’ve seen after taking possession of this body.” He said with a uneasy appearance.

“Then why is it that you tried to impersonate a Spirit Beast Mountain cultivator at the start?” Han Li closely continued with his interrogation.

“I believed that your esteemed self was a Seven Sects cultivator and didn’t want to put myself at a disadvantage.” Crooked Soul brightly assured.

Having heard that, Han Li suddenly smiled.

“Is that the truth?” Han Li amiably asked. However, his kind

appearance caused Crooked Soul to feel a chill down his back.

“That’s right! Could it be that Fellow Daoist is unsatisfied with something?” He cautiously asked with an uneasy expression.

“I’ve previously heard people say that it is easiest to deceive others with words holding seven parts truth and three parts lies. I wonder, how much of what your esteemed self told me just now is true?” Han Li slowly said this as he stared at him.

“Hehe! Daoist Friend’s suspicions are far too strong. I am telling the truth.” Crooked Soul was clearly uneasy. But once he thought of the consequences of telling the truth, he could only boldly continue to hold his ground.

“How about I mention a few things first? Your Devil Dao has already invaded our State of Yue. As such, we are now enemies. Thus, I now feel disinclined from torturing you for any secrets. I’ll just rip out your soul and save myself some time.” Han Li sinisterly said with a calm expression.

Having recently suffered, Crooked Soul’s complexion turned pale.

“Invade your State of Yue? How is this possible? The timing is clearly off.” In an instant, his pale face revealed an expression of remorse.

Han Li felt shocked.

“You knew of this matter? It seems I’ve truly underestimated you. Regardless, even if your status in the Controlling Spirit Sect was great, you are currently only a Qi Refinement cultivator! Don’t blame me for being ruthless.” Han Li gradually narrowed his gaze and said with a menacing expression.

Han Li turned his hand, causing the “Soul Congregation Bowl” to appear once more. Its dense, cold Qi immediately filled the air.

But what happened next left Han Li stunned. “Crooked Soul” didn’t reveal any fear and stared at the alms bowl with a strange expression, causing Han Li to feel ill at ease.

Han Li couldn’t use the “Soul Refinement Technique”; he was only using it as a threat. If Crooked Soul truly intended to die, then Han Li could only watch on as he perished, taking his body with him. He did have a few soul extraction spells among the secret blood sacrificial techniques, but unfortunately, he hadn’t practiced them in the least.

Just as Han Li thought this, Crooked Soul let out a long sigh before saying, “I have a few secrets on me. Furthermore, it has much to do with the life and death of your Seven Sects. However, what will guarantee that you will spare me after I reveal them? You might just kill me and refine my soul afterwards!” When he said the words “Soul Refinement”, he couldn’t help but twitch.

Having heard Crooked Soul speak so solemnly, Han Li stroked his nose and put away the alms bowl once more.

“What guarantee do you want? So long as it is reasonable, I will consider it!” Han Li responded indifferently as if he didn’t consider the secrets to be of importance.

“Humph! I cannot trust a common oath. But to the best of my knowledge, those that cultivate the “Soul Refinement Technique” are able to swear forbidden oaths with their soul tools. If they were to break them, then their Soul Refinement technique will backlash and kill them.

“Alright, I agree!” Han Li agreed with the slightest hesitation, coldly laughing in his heart.

After that, Han Li took out the Soul Congregation Bowl and made a death-pledge in accordance to Crooked Soul’s words.

Seeing Han Li so easily and cleanly swear the oath, Crooked Soul grew suspicious and faintly felt that something was amiss.

“I swore your death-pledge. Don’t tell me that you have other conditions?” Han Li stonily interrupted Crooked Soul’s doubts, deliberately revealing discontent.

“Of course not. This one knows what happens to those who are greedy. However, before I divulge these secrets, Daoist Friend must first tell me about the current circumstances of our Devil Dao and your Seven Sects as I am unsure whether this information is outdated.” Crooked Soul was distracted for a moment before explaining with a big smile.

Han Li revealed a slight trace of hesitation before slowly describing the current circumstances of the Seven Sects and Devil Dao.

Crooked Soul attentively listened but once he heard of the great battle that was to take place in a month, his face revealed a slight sneer. Han Li, who had been paying close attention to his face, clearly saw this.

Once Han Li finished, Crooked Soul muttered to himself for a moment before starting.

What he said first left Han Li at a loss for words.

“Daoist Friend, if you are willing to hear me out, you have no need to hurry over to the Seven Sects’ border camp. It is very likely the Seven Sects and the cultivators of their allied countries will have already been defeated. If you go, then you will only be throwing your life away.” Crooked Soul said with a strange expression.

With an indifferent face, Han Li coldly stared at him, waiting for an explanation.

The Controlling Spirit Sect cultivator couldn’t help but be impressed with Han Li’s collected demeanor. Although he felt increasing trepidation toward Han Li, he still continued, “You probably don’t know it, but Spirit Beast Mountain was actually one of our own sects. They had never actually broken their secret

relations with our Controlling Spirit Sect, and their recent rebellion was just a cover. If I'm not mistaken, this cover was prepared by the six sects in order to wait for the cultivators of the two allied countries, dealing with the three countries' cultivators in a single move. Presumably, after the battle is over, our Devil Dao will reign over several countries." These slowly narrated words secretly left Han Li in shock.

"Cover? Isn't this too much? Spirit Beast Mountain took the initiative to reveal their relationship with your Controlling Spirit Sect. It would've been better if they had kept it hidden." Han Li asked with an unsightly expression after recovering from his shock.

"Did Fellow Daoist truly believe that the other six sects didn't know of Spirit Beast Mountain's origins? Apart from Spirit Beast Mountain, there is another sect among your Seven Sects that was once a branch of the Devil Dao, the most powerful among the State of Yue, the Masked Moon Sect. The Masked Moon Sect once originated from the Harmonious Bond Sect. However, the Masked Moon Sect ambitiously planned to become independant and have truly broken their ties with the Harmonious Bond Sect several hundred years ago." The words of the Controlling Spirit Sect cultivator continued to leave Han Li in shock.

Chapter 340: A Trap

“Even so, many cultivators were killed in that attack, including two Core Formation cultivators. To take such losses just to conceal Spirit Beast Mountain is inconceivable!” Han Li wrinkled his brow, unwilling to be easily convinced.

“If no Core Formation cultivators died, then how would the other six sects have been convinced? Furthermore, are you really sure that those two Core Formation cultivators were genuine?” Crooked Soul sneered.

“You mean...” Han Li stared at Crooked Soul with surprise.

“To the best of my knowledge, our Devil Dao sects possesses two or three forbidden techniques that forcefully raises the cultivation of a Foundation Establishment cultivator to nearly the point of Core Formation. Naturally, there are great defects to these techniques, and they can basically only be used once on a cultivator; once used, death by ruptured meridians was inevitable and the duration of their flared cultivation was pitifully short. However, this would have been enough to trick the Seven Sects for one battle.”

Han Li grew silent and was mostly convinced.

With that in consideration, Spirit Beast Mountain could strike at an opportune moment during the confrontation between the Six Devilish Dao Sects and the Seven Sects along with their allies, and easily collapse the Seven Sects’ arranged formations. With broken

formations, the Seven Sects and their allies would be defenseless, falling prey to the Devil Dao.

“Even if what you said was true, the time for the decisive battle has not yet arrived. If I were to make a report, wouldn’t I be able to turn the tide of the battle? Why would I want to run away?” After muttering to himself for a moment, Han Li asked with doubt.

“Do you really believe our Devil Dao will strike in accordance to the time that was agreed? According to our original plans, this announcement was to confuse our opponents and leave them vulnerable as they prepared. Although I don’t know the specifics, I reckon that within a few days, our Devil Dao would launch a surprise attack on the main camp. That should be the moment when the Seven Sects will be most relaxed and reinforcements still distant. Does Fellow Daoist truly believe that your information would arrive in time and that the upper echelons would even believe you?” Crooked Soul smirked, clearly relishing the disaster that was about to befall the Seven Sects.

Han Li’s calm expression finally broke, feeling worried in his heart.

If the Seven Sects were truly defeated, his coming days would not be easy. He would have to roam across foreign countries to avoid pursuit from the Devil Dao. His only other choice would be to repair the ancient transportation formation and start a new life of cultivation in a foreign land.

“Your esteemed self appears to fully understand the Devil Dao’s plans. It seems your status was truly high. There is no need to

worry. I'm not interested in finding out your true identity. However, I must ask if you have any evidence for this. You can't possibly expect me to be completely convinced with just words, yes?" Han Li solemnly asked after a moment of thought.

Han Li's question stunned the Controlling Spirit cultivator for a moment.

"In a moment of desperation, I had already lost my body. Does Fellow Daoist truly believe there is any evidence that was left behind? If Fellow Daoist has some patience, he will only have to wait a few days to hear the results of the battle." Crooked Soul bitterly smiled before answering as if it had nothing to do with him.

Han Li coldly smiled in response.

"Without a body, your soul somehow managed to escape. However, you're still alive and were even able to recover your magic tools and other valuables; I'm sure you were able to recover such evidence as well." Han Li coolly said, striking at the heart of the matter and causing Crooked Soul's bitter smile to freeze.

"Hehe! It seems I truly cannot conceal this from Fellow Daoist. Yes, I do possess a few secret letters between Spirit Beast Mountain and my own sect. In fact, I was in charge of relaying information in the State of Yue several years ago. But I wouldn't have thought..." When Han Li exposed him, Crooked Soul revealed slight embarrassment."

Han Li inwardly sighed in response to his admission. This person was surprisingly crafty. It seems he'd have to be a bit more careful; he didn't even know his age.

“Where did you put it?”

As Han Li bluntly asked this question, he started to sweep his gaze across Crooked Soul's body.

“The jade slip letters are in my storage pouch. I placed it at a nearby cave. How about I bring Fellow Daoist there?” Crooked Soul appeared to be rather cooperative.

“You don't have it on hand?” Han Li's gaze flashed with doubt.

“As you know, this body is a reanimated corpse. Although it far exceeds ordinary men, it had lost a majority of its senses. Therefore, I fear that during an unknown moment of carelessness, I would lose my storage pouch. For that reason, I left it behind at my dwelling.” Crooked Soul explained this with difficulty, causing Han Li to feel something was amiss.

Han Li didn't say anything and carefully searched his body, ending up empty handed. He then asked with an icy tone, “Where is the cave? I will go and find it!”

Seeing that Han Li was so very cautious, Crooked Soul could only gloomily tell Han Li its location.

Han Li nodded and turned to depart. But something suddenly came to mind, and he turned around to ask, “How did you enter that corpse? Although the body would be easier to possess as it doesn’t contain a soul, it still isn’t a cultivator’s body!”

Han Li was genuinely curious.

“I don’t know!”

His answer caused Han Li’s face to darken. But without waiting for Han Li to speak, Crooked Soul hastily explained, “I truly don’t know why. During that time, I dragged my heavily injured body to Jia Yuan City and was on the verge of death. I could only desperately eject my soul and search in every direction for a cultivator to possess. However, I was unable to find a cultivator anywhere nearby. Just when I was about to give up hope, I found this soulless corpse. In a moment of desperation, I attempted to enter its body. Against all my expectations, I was truly amazed that I had succeeded.”

The Controlling Spirit Sect cultivator appeared to be incredulous from this as well.

Han Li remained silent and stared at him for a moment. He suddenly walked toward Crooked Soul and slapped two additional Soul Lock talismans on his body before vanishing into the darkness.

Crooked Soul was left behind with a bitter expression. But a short while later, Han Li returned with a strange glare in his eyes.

Han Li was able to easily find the cave using the directions given. It didn't appear to be very large.

With a wave of his hand, a moonlight stone flew out of his storage pouch. Hovering above his head, the moonlight stone illuminated his surroundings.

Then, he looked into the dark cave and pondered for a moment before taking out his white scale shield and tortoise shell. With the two magic tools protecting his front, he carefully walked inside.

Like Han Li expected, the cave was not large. After walking for about twenty-five meters, he saw a cave wall blocking his path, the presumable end of the cave.

Han Li turned his sharp gaze and found nothing strange. He then lowered his head and looked at the ground.

According to what Crooked Soul said, the storage pouch should be buried underneath a bluestone and should be easy to find.

As expected, about six meters away, he found a meter tall pitch-black chunk of what appeared to be stone.

Without thinking much further, he took several steps forward and closely examined it under the moonlight stone's gentle light.

“Xi!” Han Li exhaled in surprise.

Stone it was not. It was clearly a large pile of remains, bones with traces of rotting flesh that released the faint smell of blood.

After recovering from his astonishment, he discovered that the bones were from fierce predators such as tigers and leopards and had traces of teeth marks as if something had been biting them.

Having seen this, Han Li sunk into thought before inwardly shouting, ‘Not good!’ He hastily turned to leave the cave.

However, it was already too late. A black shadow scuttled out of some unknown place and fiercely knocked against Han Li’s white scale shield.

Suddenly, he was thrown off with intense force and fiercely slammed into the cave wall. Although he was shielded, the pain nearly caused him to pass out.

“What is this monster?” Han Li thought this with furious alarm through the severe pain.

But without waiting for Han Li to fall from the cave wall, the shadow pounced toward him once more.

Han Li reacted in fear, hurriedly placing both his defensive magic

tools in front of him.

Dāng. A clear ring surprised Han Li.

This time, the impact didn't carry a great force. Bang. However, the white scale shield was evenly split into two pieces and had fallen onto the floor.

Han Li nearly bit his tongue from terror.

Inconceivable! That monster was actually able to split his white scale shield in two!

Chapter 341: A Difficult Situation

The “White Scale Shield” was a top grade magic tool refined from materials of the “Inky Flood Dragon”. It had supported Han Li through many fierce battles. Aside from the time that it had been pierced by the “Blood Spirit Drill”, it hadn’t sustained the slightest of damage. Han Li truly found it hard to believe that it was just destroyed by some monster.

At this moment, Han Li was able to use the moonlight stone’s faint light to take a look at this monster.

The creature appeared extremely strange and was only about a meter tall. It had a small head perched on a very thin neck. However, its two green, fist-sized eyes unemotionally stared at him with cold, malicious intent.

What caught Han Li’s attention the most were its two black incisive scythe-like forelimbs; Han Li grew greatly fearful of them.

This monster had weapons! But how could these scythes be so sharp that they can split his white scale shield in one blow?

As these thoughts surged through Han Li’s mind, his body flickered, shooting straight toward the cave exit like a loosened arrow.

He wouldn’t be able to last against that monster inside such a small cave. Even if he had several lives, it still wouldn’t be enough; he had to escape in order to stand a chance!

As Han Li shot forth, the monster silently pursued him with shockingly equivalent speed.

Like two gales of wind, Han Li and the monster raced the short distance toward the cave's exit.

Once he left the cave, Han Li waved his hand without the slightest of thought, shooting a streak of white light in front of him; the white light turned into the flawless, white Divine Wind Boat.

He planned to take to the skies!

Since his defensive magic tools were unable to endure the monster's attacks, he would have to increase the distance in between them and use magic tools to ravage it from afar.

As Han Li slowed down to bring out his Divine Wind Boat, a black shadow flashed before his eyes; the monster suddenly appeared between Han Li and his Divine Wind Boat. Clang. Clang. It icily stared at Han Li while rubbing its scythe-like forelimbs against each other.

Han Li felt his heart drop.

Not only was this monster ferocious, it was also intelligent. This proved quite troublesome.

But now that they had left the dark cave, Han Li was able to fully make out the monster underneath the moonlight. It was a huge dark-gray mantis that released a strange gray aura.

Han Li lightly exhaled, suppressing the unease in his heart. His body became blurred for a moment before transforming into six identical images. Each of the illusions charged directly toward the huge mantis. Han Li wasn't completely confident that the fastest speed of his Shifting Smoke Steps could break through the monster's guard.

The mantis' eyes flashed with green light, and its body also blurred, turning into several similar reflections. Each of them moved to block Han Li's illusions.

Han Li's face became aghast.

Puff. Puff. One by one, Han Li's reflections were struck down by the mantis' blades. Just as Han Li's true body was about to be struck, he was forced to use his tortoise shell to block its strike. As a result, the strike blew him back to his original location and left a deep scar on his tortoise shell.

Han Li looked at the scar on the tortoise shell with a pale expression and gulped. It was clear that this magic tool would be unable to endure further strikes.

Without waiting for Han Li to make any plans, the mantis' meter-long wings began to shimmer and buzz. The demonic beast had actually rapidly fluttered its wings and lightly hovered off the

ground.

Han Li bitterly swore. How could he possibly forget that mantises were insects capable of flying. Once in flight, this demonic beast will surely be immensely fast.

For the first time, Han Li lacked confidence in his movement techniques.

Even so, Han Li hurried used the “Body Lightning Technique” along with other auxiliary magic techniques on his body and patted his storage pouch, releasing streaks of gold, black and red light.

He hurried, wanting use this opportunity to take the initiative.

However, the demon mantis acted before Han Li could begin his assault. It launched itself into the air and suddenly disappeared without a trace. An instant later, it reappeared above Han Li and fiercely chopped down, intending to split Han Li into two.

At this moment, Han Li appeared incomparably calm.

As the scythe sliced through Han Li’s afterimage, Han Li had completely disappeared. However, his magic tools had remained, spiralling around the demonic beast like a swarm of bees, wanting to shred it into pieces.

Dāng. Dāng. A series of clangs rang out as the huge mantis swung

its scythes at a speed that couldn't be seen by the naked eye, creating a huge defensive net. In the clash between the magic tools and the mantis' scythes, three of the golden blades and one of the fire tridents were cut into fragments, turning them into clouds of sparkling dust.

Han Li took this opportunity to fly off on his Divine Wind Boat while feeling great heartache.

He urgently recalled his remaining magic tools, causing the streaks of light to rush back toward him.

However, the demon mantis was unwilling to let him go. It clanged its forelimbs against each other and suddenly charged forward, turning into a black blur as it rapidly advanced. In an unrestrained chain of slashes, two more golden blades were broken, scattering into dust.

Han Li's feeling of loss only grew deeper.

Although this set of "Golden Beetle Swarm Blades" couldn't be considered exceptional among top grade magic tools, it was hard to come by such a large set that was easy to use. Furthermore, he had this set of magic tools for many years and had become quite attached to them. He didn't expect that a majority of them would be destroyed today.

Fortunately, Han Li's most important magic tools, the Black Dragon's Claws, were still intact. As the pair had managed to survive, it could be considered a silver lining among this terrible

situation.

But with the demon mantis still rigidly staring at him, Han Li was unable to feel hopeful. If he didn't have a good way to deal with this monster, he might not be able to save his own life, let alone his magic tools.

With that in mind, Han Li madly poured spiritual power into the Divine Wind Boat beneath his feet. The Divine Wind Boat lightly trembled for a moment before soaring into the sky as a streak of white light. Han Li truly believed that this demonic beast would be unable to match the speed of the Divine Wind Boat.

However, after a short moment of flying, Han Li couldn't help but recognize how shallow his experience was. The mantis had kept up with him and was slowly catching up!

At this moment, Han Li was wildly driving forward as he threw several fireballs behind him, attempting to stop the demon mantis from chasing him.

'This is far too strange. Not only are its attacks fierce and swift, but its flight speed is even quicker. Even my own Divine Wind Boat is slightly slower than it.' Han Li gloomily thought.

He was now completely certain that this demon mantis was far more powerful than the white spider he had previously fought.

This huge mantis wasn't a mere top grade fourth level demonic

beast. It was a fifth grade demonic beast from legend, a monster nearly capable of contending with Core Formation cultivators!

When Han Li thought of this possibility, he felt more cold sweat on his back and fired fireballs with even greater effort in an attempt to stop the demonic beast's gradual approach. Each of the fireballs were easily chopped into two, but they managed to slightly slow it down, buying Han Li some precious time.

Han Li clearly understood that if this continued, the mantis would eventually overtake him. He couldn't allow this deadlock to continue. Therefore, he separately used a thread of consciousness to enter his storage pouch and see what magic tools could be used for this situation.

Suddenly, he felt a very soft item with his strand of consciousness, and his mind flashed with inspiration, coming up with a plan immediately.

Thus, after lowering his head and observing his environment, he fiercely stomped on his Divine Wind Boat, causing it to immediately descend into the thick forest.

At that same moment, he casually took out eight common magic tools from his storage pouch and recklessly shot them all behind him. Afterwards, he threw five puppet soldiers behind him as well. As soon as they emerged, they shot out dazzling light arrows that closely followed behind the magic tools.

Although this wild attack forced the mantis to respond, it was

able to quickly tear the puppets and magic tools into pieces. But when it thought to resume chasing after Han Li, Han Li had already silently disappeared into the forest without a trace.

The demonic beast's eyes continuously flickered with green light and slowly descended. It then circled around the forest, still wanting to find Han Li.

Down below in the dense forest, Han Li was solemnly staring at the huge mantis in the sky from behind a large tree. His eyes revealed nervousness.

At this moment, he was wearing a cloak of muslin, hiding all traces of his body and completely isolating him from the world.

This "Concealing Spirit Muslin" was something Han Li had acquired after the fight with the white spider, loot he had acquired from Xuan Yue. Xuan Yue had originally planned to take advantage of this item and use the spider to deal with Han Li but he had died as a result. Not only can this muslin isolate one's Spiritual Qi fluctuations, it can also hide one's scent and presence, allowing for complete concealment.

Han Li had no choice but to use this magic tool, hoping that the demonic beast wasn't too bright and would leave after searching for a bit. Else, if it persisted, Han Li would be in dire straits.

But to guard against any contingencies, Han Li had the solidified "Blood Spirit Drill" ready in his grasp.

Although this item had astonishing speed and destructive power, Han Li wasn't confident that it would be able to kill the demonic beast, having personally witnessed the mantis' terrifying speed. Thus, he had only taken it out just in case.

Chapter 342: Bewilderment

While holding his breath, Han Li gazed at the huge mantis as it flew several few kilometers nearby before suddenly shooting toward Han Li's hiding place.

Han Li's complexion turned deathly pale.

With a cold face, he firmly held the "Blood Spirit Drill" in his hand and began to pour spiritual power into it, causing it to gradually heat up.

Han Li coldly gazed at the demonic beast as it approached, waiting for the mantis to come closer before releasing the magic tool. Only by doing this would he have a higher chance of injuring or even killing it.

Naturally, waiting for it to come closer put him in far greater danger, but Han Li was left with no other choice.

150 meters, 120 meters, 90 meters...

Han Li's heart violently thumped in his chest, and he couldn't help but suck in a deep breath as he prepared to release the Blood Spirit Drill in his hand.

But what Han Li saw next left him dumbstruck.

When the demon mantis was just sixty meters away from Han Li, it suddenly circled off into another direction, descending not far away from Han Li. After two miserable roars sounded out, the huge mantis flew away without the slightest reluctance, carrying a large mountain boar in its forelimbs.

After seeing the demonic beast fly away into the distance, Han Li finally let out a long sigh of relief and sat on the ground, despite appearing unbecoming of a cultivator.

He had just gone through a matter of life or death!

Had he went ahead and launched the attack, he would've ended up just like that boar, as food for the demonic beast.

He was extremely fortunate to come out unscathed!

Han Li silently rejoiced. This was the first time he had felt that his luck was quite good.

But now that he had calmed down, Han Li thought of the culprit that caused all of this, the Controlling Spirit Sect cultivator that resided in Crooked Soul's body.

Han Li couldn't help but feel burning fury. It was clear the cave was a trap; those jade slip letters were just a fabricated lure.

Despite his carefulness, he was still no match for that cunning old fox. He had fallen deeply into his trap and had nearly died as a

result.

“Oh, very good! Since I’m still alive, I’d better go and pay you a visit!” As Han Li rested, he felt an intense hatred burning inside him that he never felt before.

Han Li knew that because he stuck three Soul Lock talismans onto Crooked Soul, it would be impossible for him to escape; his cultivation was simply too weak. Once Han Li returned, he would be able to easily take his life.

When he felt that his physical strength and magic power had recovered, Han Li shot off on his Divine Wind Boat toward Crooked Soul.

However, he now didn’t dare to boldly fly up into the sky. Instead, he cautiously flew at a low altitude, about thirty meters up in the air, because he was afraid of catching the demonic beast’s attention once more.

On Han Li’s journey back, the freezing night wind had calmed a majority of Han Li’s raging fury. Once his mind became clearer, he started to reexamine his interactions with “Crooked Soul”.

The words and actions of the Controlling Spirit Sect cultivator were well thought out. In addition, with the fearsome strength of the demon mantis, Han Li was beginning to doubt that he was a Foundation Establishment cultivator.

How could such a fearsome demonic beast appear within fifty kilometers of a place like Jia Yuan city? There was no way it could be wild.

When he thought of the Controlling Spirit cultivator, he couldn't help but think that this huge mantis was likely a domesticated spirit beast.

It's hard to imagine that such a fearsome spirit beast was domesticated by a Foundation Establishment cultivator. From his point of view, that mantis spirit beast could handle four late Foundation Establishment disciples; it was beyond ferocious.

'Could it be that this "Crooked Soul" wasn't a Foundation Establishment cultivator but actually a Core Formation...' Han Li couldn't help but guess.

Han Li's heart jumped!

Seeing that he was about to arrive, Han Li stopped his advance and entered deep contemplation while still floating in midair.

How could a Core Formation cultivator be reduced to such a miserable state where their body was destroyed and their soul was cast adrift? Could it be that he was forced to eject his soul because he was no match for another Core Formation cultivator? Or could it be that he ran into a Nascent Soul Eccentric from the State of Yue?

However, the Seven Sect's Nascent Soul cultivators have long since detached themselves from the world. Only two or three still remained within the State of Yue. Even among the clashes between the Devil Dao and Seven Sects, Han Li had never heard of a Nascent Soul cultivator taking action.

Such a display was quite hard to imagine. With just a single wave of a hand, such an expert could easily shatter mountains and overturn the seas.

However, Han Li felt some resentment toward these Nascent Soul cultivators and inwardly cursed them several times for their detached observation of the wars of lower level cultivators. When would these profound cultivators finally take action?

'Could it be that was what happened? Is it possible that this Core Formation Expert came across a Nascent Soul Eccentric?' Han Li speculated in his mind.

If a Core Formation cultivator truly was trapped inside Crooked Soul's body, it completely made sense. After all, he knew much secret information about the Devil Dao's invasion and possessed such a powerful spirit beast as well.

After further contemplation, Han Li conceded that Crooked Soul was most likely a Core Formation cultivator. This caused him to break out in cold sweat and wear a queer expression, holding traces of both fear and excitement.

"Could it be that he had disguised himself to lure me in? Did he

pretend to have low cultivation to play with me this entire time?” Han Li did his utmost to ponder about the possibility of the worst case scenario.

“Impossible. Those displays of weakness couldn’t be faked!” After a moment more of deliberation, he finally arrived at a definite conclusion.

It was an indisputable fact that he had already occupied Crooked Soul’s body for several years. The only possible reason for this was because he had lost his body, along with his profound cultivation, like he previously said.

Even with his primordial soul, Crooked Soul would only be able to re-cultivate without any bottlenecks. His current cultivation should be as it appeared.

Furthermore, Han Li figured out that he was unable to control the mantis spirit beast. Otherwise, why wouldn’t he have such a fearsome beast follow him as a bodyguard?

During his current moment of weakness, Crooked Soul’s greatest need was strong protection. That was why he had no choice but to trick Han Li into entering the cave, in the hope that his uncontrollable mantis would kill him.

With his sharp mind, Han Li mulled through the series of events before gradually realizing the complete truth. His heart grew courageous once more.

Han Li wasn't merely taking advantage of someone's weakness. He was dealing with a Core Formation cultivator, a great enemy belonging to the Controlling Spirit Sect.

If Crooked Soul managed to run away, he would come back as a Core Formation cultivator and be certain to dismember him into countless pieces.

Therefore, Han Li absolutely couldn't leave this person alive.

Understanding how things stood, Han Li continued his flight without the slightest hesitation and flew onto the small mountaintop.

In the blink of an eye, Han Li arrived on the mountaintop and saw Crooked Soul still held in place. The talismans on his body were still untouched.

Han Li was jubilant and descended about thirty meters away from Crooked with a relaxed heart. But at the same time, he held a magic tool in each hand.

Having seen Han Li descend, Crooked Soul appear extremely shocked, as if he hadn't expected that Han Li would return alive.

Following that, he forced himself to widely smile, wanting to say something.

But Han Li just advanced several steps forward and raised his

hand, shooting two black streaks of light toward him.

Since Han Li already decided to kill him, he had no need to speak with him.

Seeing the fierce and overbearing advance of the Black Dragon's Claws, Crooked Soul's complexion paled.

Recognizing that Han Li wanted to rip him apart, Crooked Soul's body suddenly flashed, jumping several meters to the side and avoiding the attack.

“What are you doing? Don't tell me you forgot about your death-oath?” The Controlling Spirit Sect cultivator cried out in a fluster.

He clearly hadn't expected to see Han Li again and was caught off guard by his attacks.

Han Li appeared to have ignored Crooked Soul's words. Instead, he was intensely staring at the three Soul Lock talismans still on his body as if he didn't dare to believe his own eyes.

‘The talismans weren't removed but he can still move?’ Han Li's heart was filled with doubt.

However, now was not the time to be distracted by questions. Thus, Han Li snorted and remained silent. He pointed at the Black Dragon's Claws and caused them to immediately grow several times their original size, turning into two huge black lights before

charging toward Crooked Soul.

Han Li had already made up his mind. Even if he had to sacrifice the body of Crooked Soul, he had to thoroughly eliminate this Core Formation cultivator.

Seeing that Han Li had no intention to stop until he was dead, Crooked Soul gaped from desperation upon seeing the Black Dragon's Claws oppressively charge toward him. A streak of green light spouted out from Crooked Soul's mouth, rigidly blocking the full power of the Black Dragon's Claws.

Chapter 343: Brilliant Green Dagger

“What is that?”

Han Li was greatly surprised that Crooked Soul was actually able to block his full power strike and couldn't help but stare at the green light.

The inch-long dagger glimmered with a translucent green brilliance.

“Magic treasure!” Han Li couldn't help but exclaim in surprise.

Regardless of whether it was a magic treasure or not, Han Li was still shocked.

With just his sixth layer Qi Condensation cultivation, he still was able to use that item to block the Black Dragon's Claws.

Han Li was surprised that he still had a magic treasure to protect himself. It'll be a bit more troublesome, but Han Li would be able to kill him with pleasure and leisurely acquire this treasure.

He was now completely certain that this person was once a Core Formation cultivator!

With that in mind, Han Li continued his fierce assault with the Black Dragon's Claws and flipped his hand, revealing the “Spirit

Guiding Bell”.

The reason why Han Li didn't think of using it from the start was because he thought that it was unnecessary, since Crooked Soul had already been restrained by the Soul Lock Talismans.

Seeing that Han Li took out the Soul Guiding Bell, Crooked Soul's eyes flashed with panic. But, soon after, he immediately struck his lower abdomen with a grimace, spitting out an emerald-green ball. As soon as it appeared, it released a soft green light that enveloped his entire body.

At this moment, Han Li started to ring the Soul Guiding Bell, intending to cause Crooked Soul's bones to become numb and leave him unable to fight.

After a series of rings, Crooked Soul stood there unscathed as if he was completely unaffected.

Han Li's expression grew solemn. It was clear that the green ball's radiance was protecting him from the bell's effects.

With that in mind, he rang the bell two more times. Seeing that it had no effect, he gloomily put it away. Then with a wave of his hand, over ten puppets appeared in a flash of white light. They were Han Li's last remaining grade two puppets. If these were broken, then he would only be able to use his weak self-made puppets.

Therefore, Han Li had no intentions of dragging this on further. As soon as the puppets appeared, he commanded them to shoot light beams and arrows in an overbearing assault.

Upon seeing such a fearsome attack, Crooked Soul clenched his teeth in furious alarm. He hastily flung incantation gestures toward the green ball, causing it to quickly spin and glow brighter.

Suddenly, the streaks of light interweaved among each other and erupted in a dazzling explosion. Crooked Soul then rode the waves of the explosions to retreat about ten meters.

Han Li was left dumbstruck. A cultivator at only the sixth layer Qi Condensation was actually able to block the full power attack of a mid Foundation Establishment cultivator; this action was heaven defying. However, when he recalled that this person was once a Core Formation cultivator, he didn't feel that it was too strange; he'd have a few trump cards after all.

Crooked Soul inwardly sighed in relief; his secret techniques had managed to block Han Li's attack. At that same moment, he was mulling over the words he should use to persuade Han Li to stop his furious barrage of attacks. Since he had a pitiful amount of magic power, he wouldn't be able to last much longer.

But without waiting for him to speak, Han Li touched his storage pouch after a moment of hesitation and suddenly raised his hand, releasing a blinding flash of red light.

Crooked Soul was astonished!

Without understanding what had happened, the floating green ball had ruptured before his eyes, and he felt an agonizing pain from the very depths of his soul. He couldn't help but scream loudly as he fell to the ground with limbs incessantly flailing about.

The green light protecting Crooked Soul's body had disappeared without a trace upon the destruction of the green ball. With nothing left to obstruct the light beams and arrows, he was suddenly overwhelmed as if he were drowning in a torrent of rain.

Without a master to control it, the green dagger suddenly decreased in power and was forcibly suppressed by Han Li's Black Dragon's Claws, as if it was going to collapse at any time.

Han Li was overjoyed.

He hadn't expected that risky strike to be so effective.

The reason why he hadn't used the Blood Spirit Drill to directly strike at the heart or the head was because they were not vital points to Crooked Soul, a moving corpse.

At most, Han Li would only be able to severely injure him while being unable to kill him.

With that in mind, it would be better to strike at that troublesome green ball.

However, he hadn't expected that the green ball would rupture from a single strike and cause Crooked Soul to meet his end.

It appeared that the green ball had a close connection to his soul. It was no wonder that he had such an unsightly expression when he spouted it out to face an enemy!

Could it have been the golden core he had condensed from Core Formation? Han Li sinisterly guessed.

Han Li then waved his hand, stopping the puppets' attacks before taking a close look in Crooked Soul's direction.

After the streaks of light faded away, Han Li clearly saw a blackened corpse lying on the ground. Han Li was greatly surprised to find that the corpse hadn't turned into ash.

Could it be that Crooked Soul's body was extraordinary because he was a jiāngshi?

Han Li remained motionless, looking at the corpse for a moment and muttering to himself. He then raised his hand to the sky, causing six fist-sized fireballs to appear in the air. "Go". With a single command, the fireballs shot toward the corpse like a loosed arrow.

Puff. Puff. Han Li indifferently gazed at the corpse as it burned in the inferno.

An instant later, an egg-sized green sphere of light suddenly flew out from the inferno, wanting to escape.

Han Li's face grew cold and his body blurred, appearing behind the ball of light. His hand shot out like lightning, grabbing it while covered in white light. The green sphere of light suddenly let out a miserable scream before Han Li crushed it with his spiritual power infused hand.

Han Li then blurred, returning to Crooked Soul in an instant. With a wave of his sleeve, the fire on Crooked Soul's body disappeared without a trace.

"It seems even a Core Formation cultivator can be duped with a mere illusion technique." Han Li lowered his head to look at the blackened Crooked Soul with a sneer on his face.

Han Li then carefully examined Crooked Soul's injuries.

He was greatly surprised to find that apart from his completely scorched exterior, Crooked Soul's internal organs and bones were entirely undamaged, much to Han Li's pleasure.

Although Crooked Soul was only an empty corpse, Han Li had regarded him as a loyal servant. If Han Li was able to repair him, then he would naturally do so. Besides, he had a plan in mind that required Crooked Soul.

As such, Han Li lightly rung the “Soul Guiding Bell”. Crooked Soul immediately stood up and opened his eyes with a blank expression.

Han Li nodded his head. Although Crooked Soul had flesh wounds, he should be able to quickly recover with his exceptional regenerative power as a jiangshi.

Han Li then turned his gaze toward the small shining green dagger floating in the air. Having lost its master, it was now completely still.

Han Li proceeded to use his Black Dragon’s Claws to gradually suppress it before carefully submerging his spiritual sense into it. He found that he was completely blocked from entering it.

“It seems like the rumors were true. Without Core Formation cultivation, I will be completely unable to use magic treasures.” Han Li thought with annoyance. He could only look upon this magic treasure with envy.

However, Han Li was still very interested in this magic treasure. After a few cautious tests, he finally grabbed it with his hand and carefully admired it.

The blade of the dagger was only an inch and a half long. Without a master to imbue it with spiritual power, its splendor had greatly weakened. However, it still released a mist of cold aura that appeared exceptionally beautiful.

In addition, the dagger's body was inscribed with two ancient characters. Han Li couldn't help but softly whisper upon reading its name, "Green Brilliance."

Han Li lovingly fiddled with it for a moment before reluctantly putting away the "Green Brilliance Dagger" inside his storage pouch.

Han Li looked around to see if he had missed anything. As a result, his attention was drawn to specks of green light on the ground.

He went over to take a careful look and discovered that they were fragments of the green ball that had been destroyed by Blood Spirit Drill. Although it had been shattered, its radiance hadn't diminished in the slightest.

He walked over and bent down, carefully gathering the shards.

Although he didn't know how he could make use of it, Han Li could guess that it should have something to do with a Core Formation cultivator's golden core.

Chapter 344: Exterminating A Demon In A Formation

Han Li didn't carefully study the fragments; instead, he carefully swept his surroundings once more. After he was convinced that he hadn't overlooked anything, he started to think about how he should deal with the huge mantis.

He didn't want to let this demonic beast slip by. After all, its forelimbs were rare, high-quality crafting materials, not to mention the other parts of its body.

As for subduing the monster alive, Han Li abandoned the thought after some consideration.

He clearly understood that he did not have the experience required to attempt it. Cultivators that control demonic beasts have learned to restrain magic beasts since their childhood and have become extremely familiar with the process. Wanting to vainly keep such a powerful spiritual beast was just wishful thinking.

As for the Controlling Spirit Sect cultivator, he had probably lost control of the mantis when he lost his body and changed appearances. Else, his spirit beast would've remained in his control. The spirit beast would've loyally served him for a lifetime and never leave him. It was bound to be more loyal than a human.

As for whether Han Li should inform the Seven Sects and their allies of this information, he decided to wait for a few days and

listen for any news since he had no way of knowing whether the Controlling Spirit Sect cultivator's information was genuine or not. After all, he could travel at great speed. Even if he was a few days late, he would be able to arrive at the Seven Sects' Camp before the deadline.

As a result, Han Li spent a day in the dense forest near the mountain cave, secretly setting up the "Five Elements Reversal Great Formation".

Han Li didn't lay out a portion of the great formation in a hurry, like he did at the Imperial Palace. He had set up the formation in its entirety; its power was naturally far greater than before.

At this moment, he saw the huge mantis leave to hunt for food. It had actually brought back a huge black tiger, leaving Han Li astonished.

This was the first time he had seen this kind of black tiger; it was definitely no common beast. However, it was quite unfortunate that this beast had met its end, merely becoming a wholesome meal for the mantis.

Having finished his preparations, Han Li quietly snuck into the mountain cave.

But just a short moment later, he was already rushing out of the cave on his Divine Wind Boat, flying straight toward his formation. A shadow closely pursued him; it was the huge mantis that Han Li had startled.

Because he had placed the formation nearby, Han Li entered the formation's territory soon after he left the cave. Although the mantis was somewhat intelligent, it couldn't possibly comprehend the formation spell and was easily trapped within the formation spell.

In the following two days, Han Li allowed the huge mantis to frantically run around within the Five Elements Reversal Formation, fully displaying the effects of the illusionary entrapment and the boundaries of area confinement.

After the two days had passed, the demonic beast was exhausted and no longer moved within the formation. At that moment, Han Li took out many puppets and started to unceasingly harass it from outside the formation, prohibiting it from resting.

Although the mantis' attacks were exceedingly fearsome, its defense was just ordinary. Because it couldn't approach the puppets attacking it, it was forced to use its scythe-like forelimbs to protect itself.

This continued for half a day until the demon mantis was no longer able to endure, allowing the puppets to strike at its body. Although its injuries weren't heavy, its strength had been mostly exhausted. At this moment, Han Li took turns changing the puppets' spirit stones.

Seeing that it was almost time to finish up, Han Li summoned a treasure talisman, a small yellow knife. Under the cover of the

puppets' attacks, it stabbed through the mantis' head, killing it within the formation.

Victorious, Han Li walked toward the demon beast's corpse with barely concealed excitement. He then took out his huge silver sword and cut off its incisive forelimbs.

Then with great expectations, he slowly opened the mantis' abdomen. He hoped that this demon beast was truly a grade five demon beast. As such, he would be able to acquire an exceptionally rare demon core.

Han Li's face suddenly revealed pleasant surprise, but his expression turned strange immediately after. He was shocked by the items he had taken out of the corpse, several identical shining white ovals with visible veins.

"Monster beast eggs?" Han Li spoke to himself with astonishment. He was a bit confused; he had been expecting a demon beast's core.

After Han Li recovered from his astonishment, he removed another seven eggs from the mantis' abdomen for a total of over ten eggs.

These eggs were the same size as a chicken's egg. Han Li couldn't help but laugh; this was truly a pleasant surprise.

He immediately thought of something and suddenly wrinkled his

brows. His brows remain furrowed as he placed his finger on a white egg and closed his eyes.

Shortly after, Han Li's face became unsightly. These eggs didn't contain the slightest aura of life and were clearly lifeless. This was quite common with regards to demon beasts. After all, how could an extraordinary demon beast leave behind offspring so easily?

With a gloomy expression, he tested the rest of the eggs. As expected, all the eggs were lifeless, causing him to feel depressed.

With an angry heart, Han Li thought of turning the eggs to ash, but after a moment of hesitation, he decided to keep them in a jade container.

“This mantis wasn't a common demon beast. Even if its eggs were dead, they could prove to be useful!” Han Li said with unwillingness.

After he picked off the mantis' gray wings, Han Li turned its corpse into ash and flew off toward the cave. Although his hopes weren't high, Han Li still wanted to see if there was anything worth taking.

Han Li's search resulted in a surprise.

Inside the cave, Han Li actually found a shriveled, gray-robed corpse. The corpse had an intact storage pouch at its waist.

As Han Li grasped the storage pouch, his heart was pounding heavily.

There was no question. This corpse was certain to be the remains of that Controlling Spirit Sect cultivator. When he ejected his soul from his body, he had actually left his storage pouch behind, leaving behind a pleasant surprise for Han Li!

Naturally, Han Li couldn't have known that the Controlling Spirit Sect cultivator had immediately perished because his injuries were too severe. He was only able to bind his Green Brilliance Dagger and condense a small amount of his Golden Core's spiritual Qi into that green ball, flusteredly taking two items with him before his soul left his body. After all, if he was too late, then his soul would perish along with his body.

The storage pouch in his hands had belonged to a Core Formation cultivator. After suppressing the giddy excitement in his heart, he submerged his spiritual sense into the storage pouch and carefully examined what was inside.

However, after searching through the storage pouch, Han Li no longer felt any of his previously held excitement.

The huge storage pouch was actually filled with jars and pots. A majority of them were demon beast feed for insects. This was naturally of no use to Han Li. The rest was just a bit better, containing all sorts of named insect specimens.

After a bit of investigation, Han Li found that most of the insects

were still alive, much to his surprise. They had actually survived after several years without care. Their vitality was truly tenacious!

As for the high grade talismans, magic tools and treasure talismans that Han Li direly needed, not a single one of them could be found, leaving Han Li speechless.

Fortunately, Han Li had eventually reached the bottom layer of the storage pouch and found a green jade slip that greatly roused Han Li's interest.

The slip contained that Controlling Spirit Sect cultivator's experiences on breeding insects. Not only did it introduce over a thousand unknown insects to Han Li, but it also mentioned the secret techniques that were used to breed and control them. But what caught Han Li's interest the most was his ranking of which insects were the most ferocious.

The huge mantis was obviously on the list. Although it was gray, he had called it the "Golden-back Demon Mantis". This caused Han Li to be utterly confused for a moment.

This huge mantis was only ranked seventy-three in his list of strange insects. There were still over seventy-two even more fearsome insects on that list. Han Li, who had personally witnessed the strength of the "Golden-back Demon Mantis", was stunned.

Han Li eagerly looked through the list for most of the day before finally withdrawing his spiritual sense from the jade slip. After a moment of contemplation, he started to match the insects in his

possession with the description of the fantastical insects he had read about.

The results left Han Li beyond dissatisfied!

Without considering any other uses the insects may have, their rankings were far too low! Only two of them were ranked above a hundred and the vast majority of them were ranked among two and three hundred!

Had that Controlling Spirit Sect cultivator heard Han Li's complaints, he definitely would've cursed him out! How could these strange insects be so easily acquired? Not to mention the top hundred rankings, even insects ranked in the top three to four hundred were rare breeds that were acquired over several hundred years of effort and violent struggle.

Chapter 345: A Small Old Man And Bell Tolls

After looking through the items in the storage pouch, Han Li bluntly moved all of the items into his own storage pouch before slicing the original storage pouch into pieces.

Although this storage pouch was clearly much better than his own, Han Li didn't dare to use it as he wasn't sure if the bag possessed any hidden traces.

Han Li then rested for another day before he felt that it was about time to leave. With Crooked Soul in tow, he flew toward Yellow Maple Valley instead of the Seven Sects Camp.

Han Li reckoned that if anything bad occurred at the Seven Sects Camp, the sects would be the first to receive this information. Therefore, he first headed to the sect in order to hear if there was any news. If nothing was out of the ordinary, then he would quickly convene at the Seven Sects Camp.

After flying for six days, he had uneventfully arrived at the Tai Yue Mountain Range.

Han Li didn't notify anyone. Instead, he first secretly returned to his own Immortal's cave first.

Once he entered the cave and closed off his formation from the outside, Han Li felt much more at ease. After all, he was in the safety of his own territory.

Han Li immediately rushed to the secret room containing his spirit well spring.

He found two fist-sized spiders floating in the spirit well spring, having already hatched from their eggs. Although they weren't large, one could tell that they were beyond ordinary from their sparkling and translucent bodies.

Upon seeing Han Li, the small spiders blurred, immediately shooting toward him. Han Li was surprised at first, but something immediately came to mind, and he didn't avoid them.

As a result, the two spiders steadily landed on Han Li's shoulders and mischievously crawled over Han Li's body.

Han Li faintly smiled. It seems the soul controlling restriction that used his blood essence had an effect. The two spiders already saw him as their parent and thus had shown such affection.

Delighted, Han Li picked up a spider off of his body and carefully observed it with curiosity.

Although spiders generally gave people feelings of great disgust and hate, this spider had a shining, pure-white body. It was extremely beautiful, giving people the notion of wanting to pet it in admiration.

But what surprised Han Li the most was that the small spider

already had the Spiritual Qi of a fourth layer Qi Condensation cultivator. It was already a genuine low grade one demonic beast. It appeared it had great potential!

With regards to the white spider's ranking on the list, it was listed as the "Blood Jade Spider" at about rank one hundred. Although it was not as fearsome as the "Golden-Back Demon Mantis", it was a rare breed.

Han Li played around with the two small spiders for a moment before placing them inside a leather bag. Since he didn't know when he would be able to return, he naturally wanted to carry them with him so that he could properly train them.

Afterwards, Han Li went to his own bedroom and took out a small chest from underneath his bed.

The box contained storage pouches filled with all kinds of talismans. Han Li casually took two of them. Since he had nearly used all of the talismans on hand, he had to replenish them.

Having finished his affairs, Han Li left Crooked Soul in his Immortal's cave and confidently flew straight toward Yellow Maple Valley.

Perhaps it was because a majority of the people had already hurried off to the Seven Sects' Camp, Han Li only came across a few separated Qi Condensation disciples. He casually stopped one and made an inquiry about the circumstances of the valley. No news had arrived about misfortune falling upon the Seven Sects,

much to Han Li's relief.

But since this had only come from a Qi Condensation disciple, Han Li couldn't let this matter drop. After a moment of consideration, he headed straight toward the Hundred Medicine Garden. As a mid Foundation Establishment cultivator, that small old man should have some reliable information.

A short moment later, Han Li had appeared above the Hundred Medicine Garden, but he was blocked by the white mist formation spell.

He had long returned its command medallion to the small old man and could no longer enter the Hundred Medicine Garden as he pleased.

Although Han Li had already witnessed the power of the Five Elements Reversal Formation, the small old man's simple illusion formation was still able to obstruct Han Li. Instead of entering by force, Han Li sent a sound transmission talisman instead; after speaking into it, it turned into a streak of fire, flying into the white mist.

Not long after, the white mist below him blew away, allowing him a path in.

When Han Li saw this, he chuckled and gently descended.

When he arrived at the center of the Hundred Medicine Garden,

he found two people waiting for him.

“Senior Martial Brother Ma, it’s been a while!” Han Li grinned at a small old man as he said this.

“Humph! Even without seeing each other, you still went and found trouble for me!” The small old man, the master of the Hundred Medicine Garden, didn’t greet him with a smile and rolled his eyes instead.

“Hehe! Could it be that such an adorable disciple like Young Lady Xiao is not to your satisfaction?” Han Li continued to grin at him completely without concern.

With a slightly red face, the young woman saluted Han Li and greeted him with gratitude, “Xiao Cui’er pays her respects to Martial Uncle Han. Many thanks for Martial Uncle’s great kindness!”

This young girl was the granddaughter of that Xiao grandparent-grandchild pair.

When the small old man heard this, he revealed an unsightly expression. But when he wanted to say something, Han Li quickly interrupted him. “Senior Martial Brother Ma, the reason why I came here is because I have a few important matters to discuss with you. It concerns something significant!” Han Li suddenly said with a solemn expression.

Having seen Han Li's solemn expression, the small old man wrinkled his brow. An instant later, he instructed Xiao Cui'er, "Guard the garden's entrance. I have a few matters to discuss with your Martial Uncle Han!"

"Yes, Master!" The young woman respectfully replied and silently walked to the garden's entrance.

Xiao Cui'er's obedient action was clearly to the small old man's satisfaction. He had even revealed a trace of a fond expression.

When Han Li saw this, he inwardly laughed. This Senior Martial Brother Ma said that he gave him trouble, but he was inwardly fond of Xiao Cui'er. Even so, he was still trying so hard to save face in spite of this!

The small old man brought Han Li into his guest room. After they both sat down, he insipidly asked, "Junior Martial Brother, shouldn't you be at the border camp? How do you still have time to come here for questions? Let's hear what's so important that you had to come here!"

Senior Martial Brother Ma wore an indifferent expression.

"... It's a long story!" Han Li sighed and bitterly smiled.

Because Han Li had been friends with the small old man for so many years, he knew that although the old man's words were caustic, he had a truly good character. Thus, he had told him about

his encounter with the Controlling Spirit Sect cultivator. Naturally, Han Li glossed over the finer details of the fight and focused on the possibility that Spirit Beast Mountain was still working with the Devil Dao.

After hearing Han Li out, the small old man's expression became stiff.

A long while later, he eventually asked Han Li with a strange expression, "Junior Martial Brother Han! You exterminated the soul of a Core Formation cultivator? And Spirit Beast Mountain is still an agent of the Devil Dao?"

He was in complete disbelief as if he had listened to a tall tale.

Han Li's face became bitter in response.

It was no wonder why the old man was like this. No one could be convinced in such a short amount of time.

Han Li tensely wrinkled his brow and replied, "I don't know how reliable this information is. That's why I returned to the sect first to see if there was any news from the border camp. If nothing had happened, I would be able to go there with an easy heart." Han Li didn't conceal anything from the small old man, fully revealing his great desire to preserve his own life.

"There is nothing. We've only received requests to transport large quantities of spirit stones and other supplies. No negative

news had arrived. It has all been very ordinary.” The small old man said with a stern expression.

Han Li lightly sighed and stroked his nose, muttering, “It seems I was completely made a fool of by him! I want to curse that cultivator out to vent my gloominess. Or maybe I should be celebrating that nothing bad had happened to the main camp instead?”

Dāng. Dāng. Just as he finished speaking, the sound of a huge bell continuously tolled from the official hall.

The small old man and Han Li couldn’t help but look at each other in dismay.

The bell tolls continued for the time it would take to finish a cup of tea before stopping.

The small old man had an extremely unsightly expression and took a deep breath. He spoke with a deep voice, “No less than eighty-one tolls. It seems your information is most likely true. The circumstances are far from great!”

“Let’s go and see what happened. It might not have anything to do with my information.” Han Li calmly said after a moment of silence.

“Humph! It’d be a miracle if it were not! If it’s not a major defeat at the frontlines, what else would cause the Dragonwaking Bell to

toll eighty-one times, representing a extermination level crisis of our sect?” The small old man bitterly smiled.

Chapter 346: Venerable Ancestor Ling Hu

Han Li and the small old man left the room together. Having heard the series of bell tolls, Xiao Cui'er, who was guarding the garden entrance, couldn't help but look back at the old man in panic.

The small old man wrinkled his brow and walked over to her, whispering something in her ear. Afterwards, the young girl was calm once more.

The old man then called out to Han Li, and the two flew off in the direction of the Official Hall.

On the way there, Han Li saw many cultivators travelling in the same direction. However, a large majority of them were Qi Condensation disciples; it was clear the sect's strength had greatly diminished. When the Devil Dao arrived, even with the great protective formations, the sect wouldn't be able to endure for long.

With solemn expressions, the two remained silent on their journey. Soon, they arrived at a huge stone hall.

At this moment, over a thousand cultivators gathered in front of the hall. However, the guards blocked them all from entering. They only allowed cultivators who were at least Foundation Establishment to enter.

Under the crowd's complicated gazes, Han Li and the small old man silently entered.

Once Han Li entered the Official Hall, he was shocked! It was not chaotic like he had expected. Instead, he saw over a hundred cultivators waiting in complete silence, respectfully gazing at a seated person.

This person wasn't the Yellow Maple Valley Sect Master, Zhong Lingdao. Instead, Sect Master Zhong Lingdao was actually standing at his side.

The old man had fully white hair, wore embroidered clothes, and had a yellow, withered expression. But for some unknown reason, Han Li's heart pounded upon seeing him and he found it hard to stop his limbs from trembling.

'What is this?' Han Li was amazed.

The old man had merely gazed at Han Li and the small old man, but that mere gaze caused Han Li to feel his body go ice-cold and his heart to feel stifled, as if his concealed secrets were seen through. Han Li couldn't help but grow pale from the shock.

"Hm? Your soul cultivation is quite good. What kind of soul strengthening cultivation technique do you use?" When the old man saw Han Li, his eyes flashed with amazement.

When Han Li heard this, he experienced both anger and terror.

He felt overwhelmed with disbelief. He did not sense any

spiritual power from the old man, illustrating that the differences in their cultivation were like heaven and earth. However, Li Huayuan and the other Core Formation cultivators didn't make him feel this way. Could it be that this person is a...

After a moment of thought, Han Li was left dumbstruck. Having long flung his anger away from even the farthest of clouds, Han Li hastily replied with the utmost respect, "This one reports to Senior that he truly had cultivated a technique that has some relation to the soul. Senior's gaze is truly perceptive!" His reply held a tone of flattery.

The embroidered clothed old man faintly smiled and lightly waved his hand. Han Li and the small old man then tactfully stood among the crowd.

After the time it took to finish a meal, more than ten Foundation Establishment cultivators had arrived.

At that moment, Zhong Lingdao respectfully said to the old man, "Venerable Ancestor, all of the Foundation Establishment cultivators present in the sect have already arrived. As for Martial Senior Huang, he won't be able to return soon. He is currently at Heavenrock Mountain."

When the embroidered clothed old man heard this, he slightly wrinkled his brow and immediately instructed him with indifference, "Then so be it. We cannot afford to delay this further. We will start first without him."

“Yes, Venerable Ancestor speaks truly!” Zhong Lingdao strongly agreed with him.

The embroidered clothed old man chuckled in response and didn't say anything further.

“My fellow martial brothers, let me introduce you all to our Venerable Ancestor Ling Hu. As you have previously heard, he had entered Nascent Soul stage three hundred years ago and is our sect's sole Grand Elder. As of now, our sect had encountered an unprecedented crisis of extermination. Our Venerable Ancestor will fully explain this matter.”

After finishing, Zhong Lingdao stepped off to the side.

Although a majority of those present had correctly guessed the identity of this embroidered clothed old man, an uproar emerged upon their suspicions being confirmed.

The crowd looked upon this Venerable Ancestor Ling Hu with a peculiar gaze. In the near thousand years that Yellow Maple Valley had existed, there had only been one Nascent Soul cultivator. At nearly eight hundred years old, it could be said that he was the unaging father of Yellow Maple Valley.

Ancestor Ling Hu lightly coughed in response to the chaotic situation, immediately silencing the entire hall. Who would dare to not give face to this venerable ancestor?

“Since you’ve all heard the Dragonwaking Bell, I won’t beat around the bush. As of now, our Seven Sects along with our allied armies have suffered a huge frontal defeat, along with a disastrous amount of casualties and wounded. Although we’ve barely managed to establish a second defensive line, defeat is only a matter of time.”

After the old man said this, all the cultivators in the hall paled. Han Li and the small old man looked at each other with complicated expressions but remained silent.

“Venerable Ancestor, how is this possible? The day of the decisive battle has yet to come? There is still a month!” A middle-aged cultivator couldn’t help but ask this.

“It is because those at the frontline held the same thoughts as you that the Devil Dao was able to launch such a successful surprise attack!” The embroidered clothed old man bluntly rebuked him with dark expression. The middle-aged man thoroughly blushed and saluted him before hastily stepping back.

No one else dared to be so tactless, having seen the middle-aged cultivator’s embarrassment. As a result, they suppressed the many doubts they held in their heart and silently waited for Ancestor Ling Hu to continue.

“This disastrous defeat cannot be completely blamed on our own force’s carelessness and their lack of vigilance. There was a traitor among the Seven Sects: Spirit Beast Mountain. While they were solely standing guard, they actually opened the exterior formation and allowed the Devil Dao entry, leading to our disastrous defeat.”

As the old man said this, he revealed a trace of anger.

The crowd of cultivators suddenly came to a realization and loudly cursed Spirit Beast Mountain, causing the scene to become chaotic once more.

“Enough. There is no use in cursing. As the enemy’s means were greater than ours, we have no other choice but to concede defeat. Currently, the most important matter is how to prevent our sect from being exterminated. Our remaining cultivators on the frontlines will only be able to last two or three days at most. Before that time comes, we must evacuate the State of Yue as soon as possible.” Ancestor Ling Hu said with exceptional calm.

“Evacuate from the State of Yue?” Once that question was asked, the entire hall grew silent as if they were all stunned.

As cultivators who had lived their entire lives in the State of Yue, they found leaving hard to accept. For a while, nobody spoke in agreement.

“What? You find it hard to leave?” The old man said indifferently. He was hardly surprised.

“Venerable Ancestor, could it be that you and the other Nascent Soul Seniors have no method to repel the Devil Dao?” Eventually, a thirty-year-old youth hesitantly asked this.

“Of course we can. If us old fellows were to join hands, we should

be able to easily exterminate those Devil Dao cultivators.” The old man said straightforwardly.

“Then, could Venerable Ancestor...”

“But you all shouldn’t forget, with the Six Devil Dao’s grand reputation, how could they be lacking in Nascent Soul cultivators? We old fellows had already acted against them, but we were at a disadvantage. As a result, they compelled us to swear a death-oath such that as long as they did not participate in the battles, we wouldn’t either. As such, the battles were restricted to the level of Core Formation cultivators.” Ancestor Ling Hu sighed and revealed a surprising secret.

Han Li suddenly came to a realization as to why he had never seen any battles between Nascent Soul cultivators.

“If we do not move, they will be able to surround Yellow Maple Valley and deal with the sect in a single move. Since I am bound by oath, I will not be able to save you. Thus, I’ve already decided that the entire sect must depart the State of Yue. Furthermore, we aren’t the only ones leaving. The other five sects will be joining us. As such, we will be able to rise back to power in a foreign land. When our strength is sufficient, we will return and fight for our rightful place in the State of Yue.” Ancestor Ling Hu spoke with a cold smile. Naturally, he didn’t find leaving the State of Yue to be intolerable.

Having heard the Ancestor’s decisive tone, the others could only follow his commands; they didn’t dare to voice any differing opinions they may have held.

“Most of the other affairs have been settled. However, there is still one dangerous task that must be done.” Ancestor Ling Hu suddenly said something that shocked the crowd, causing them to look at each other in dismay.

“The following people I point to must follow me to the rear hall. The others will remain and listen to Sect Master Zhong’s evacuation arrangements!” The old man then stood up from his seat and expressionlessly walked toward the crowd. The crowd continued to remain in shock.

“You, you, and you...” With no trace of politeness, he pointed to over half of the people present; Han Li and the small old man were included among the chosen. After finishing the selection, the ancestor walked toward the rear hall apathetically.

Han Li and the others were restless and hesitated for a moment before obediently following behind him.

Chapter 347: Evacuation

When they arrived at the rear hall, the old man was standing with his hands held behind his back.

Seeing that the many cultivators had arrived, he said with a calm expression, “Those of you that I had just chosen have good aptitude or have practiced exceptional cultivation arts. As such, you are the spark that will ignite our sect’s revival. Therefore, I will give you all half a day to immediately return and retrieve your items. Afterwards, Martial Nephew Huang will lead you on your journey.”

Everyone was shocked. Someone then asked in bewilderment, “Venerable Ancestor, don’t we still have two more days before the Devil Dao breach our defensive line? Why the hurry?”

“Humph! While it will take two days to break through our defensive line, do you believe that they will allow those left behind to slip away? They will send men past the defensive line to attack the distant sects, most likely with the objective to obstruct our escape rather than extermination. For this reason, we will sacrifice those outside in order to buy time for you to retreat. But if you dare to leak this matter during the time you are to retrieve your items, our retreat will be met with great chaos, and I will have to personally dispose of the sect.” The ancestor’s voice was extremely callous, causing the hearts of those present to tremble.

“Yes, Venerable Ancestor.”

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Naturally, Han Li and the others didn't dare to object. They all respectfully agreed and went out to retrieve their items.

On their way back, Han Li and the small old man parted with much on their minds.

Because Han Li's Immortal's cave was too far away, he had to fly at full speed on his Divine Wind Boat.

Han Li's heart was in turmoil.

According to what Ancestor Ling Hu said, Han Li would no longer have to worry about his well-being. If they were to move to another country, he would be regarded as valuable due to the fact that manpower was lacking.

But at the same time, they would have to conquer territory in a new country in order to establish Yellow Maple Valley. As one of the remaining Foundation Establishment cultivators, Han Li would be preoccupied with miscellaneous affairs. He would no longer have much time remaining to cultivate!

Presumably, when this matter had been settled and the six sects have reestablished themselves, he would've already come across an opportunity to advance to the Core Formation stage. However, Han Li was unwilling to deal with these troublesome affairs for such a long period of time.

But as Han Li entertained the idea of making his escape, he had no idea whether or not he was still being observed by that old eccentric's spiritual sense. He didn't know if his actions could still be observed at this distance. If this were the case, he would be certain to meet a tragic end if he deserted.

Han Li felt great regret. Had he known that the situation had deteriorated to this degree, he definitely would've fled the country instead of returning!

Without any other option, Han Li could only return to his Immortal's cave.

Upon entering his Immortal's cave, he first headed to his bedroom and took all the talisman-filled storage pouches from underneath his bed. He then went to his storage room and put away his remaining rare medicine ingredients.

Lastly, he went to the secret room that held the spirit well spring and completely destroyed it, concealing the spirit well spring.

Since he was currently unable to transport this item, Han Li didn't want those from the Devil Dao to make use of it.

Having finished all that, Han Li inspected his residence thoroughly once more. Feeling that he hadn't overlooked anything, he called Crooked Soul out of the cave before carefully removing and putting away the formation flags and plates of the first set of the "Five Phases Reversal Formation".

After the formation spell disappeared, he looked at the large entrance of his Immortal's cave. With an intense gaze, he suddenly released two streaks of black light and smashed the mountaintop, thoroughly concealing his immortal's cave.

Subsequently, he released the Divine Wind Boat and brought Crooked Soul on board. After flying a circle around his former home, he finally flew off.

By the time Han Li returned to the Official Hall, most of the others had already arrived. Leaving Crooked Soul outside, he entered the hall by himself.

But what surprised him was that apart from tens of Foundation Establishment cultivators, several hundred Qi Condensation Disciples were also gathered outside the hall.

‘Could it be that they will evacuate together with us?’ Han Li thought doubtfully.

His eyes suddenly brightened upon seeing the small old man and Xiao Cui'er. They were quietly talking to each other with grim expressions.

Having seen this, Han Li walked over without hesitation.

“Martial Uncle Han!” Xiao Cui'er respectfully greeted Han Li when she saw him approach.

Han Li nodded to her with a smile and then turned toward the small old man, whispering, “What’s going on? Are these Qi Condensation disciples travelling with us?”

Han Li spoke in a soft voice to avoid attracting the others’ attention.

“That’s right!”

“To avoid being easily abandoned, these disciples either possessed exceptional aptitude or distinguished status. My own disciple also has exceptional aptitude!” The small old man spoke indifferently. But when he mentioned Xiao Cui’er, he revealed a trace of pride; Han Li found this somewhat humorous.

A short while later, Ancestor Ling Hu and a valiant middle-aged man appeared.

“I’ve just received information that traces of Devil Dao cultivators have been spotted nearby. We must all immediately set off. Obey Martial Nephew Huang’s orders from now on! I will gather the remaining sect members to draw the enemy.” Ancestor Ling Hu spoke with a solemn expression.

Han Li and the others were shocked by what they heard. The Devil Dao were truly swift!

The valiant middle-aged man who stood by his side followed up,

coldly saying, “As time is pressing, I will keep it short. In this evacuation, I only have one demand. You must all listen to my orders. Those that disobey will be regarded as traitors. We will now depart!”

This person was truly quick and decisive! With those brief statements, he respectfully saluted the old man before taking the lead to leave the hall.

After a moment of astonishment, everyone rushed after him like a swarm of bees.

As a result, the grand crowd of several hundred cultivators took to the skies and hurriedly flew toward the northeast.

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Over half a day later, the group had arrived at the Tai Yue Mountain Range. At that point, they slightly increased their speed.

Standing on the Divine Wind Boat, Han Li flew near the front of the group. When the small old man saw that Han Li’s Divine Wind Boat could carry more, he dragged Xiao Cui’er into the boat with him without a trace of politeness. Han Li could only bitterly laugh in response and said nothing more.

Xiao Cui’er was a bit interested in Crooked Soul who stood behind Han Li and stared at him with wide eyes. Naturally, the young girl was able to somewhat see through Crooked Soul. After

asking a few questions, she no longer pressed the issue.

After travelling over fifty kilometers through the Tai Yue Mountain Range, a streak of white light suddenly shot toward the group from behind. In the blink of an eye, it travelled past the group and into the hand of Martial Uncle Huang. It was a sparkling short sword with a jade slip tied to it.

The middle-aged man's face darkened and he waved his hand, stopping the group.

After taking the jade slip off, he casually flung the short sword away. Immediately after, it transformed back into a streak of white light and flew back toward its original location.

Martial Uncle Huang then probed the jade slip with his spiritual sense. A moment later, his face became very unsightly, and he immediately lowered his head in deep contemplation. It was obvious that a troublesome matter had occurred.

“The circumstances have changed. All Foundation Establishment cultivators step forward. I must assign you another duty.” The middle-aged man turned around and said this with a dark expression.

These words left Han Li and company stunned. But after they looked at each other, Xiao Cui'er cleverly jumped off the Divine Wind Boat, and they obediently flew forward.

“Martial Uncle, what happened?” Many had witnessed the middle-aged man receiving a message from the flying sword.

“Venerable Ancestor sent us a message. The Devil Dao is about to arrive. It seems like they knew of our plan and separated into two groups. One group moved to surround Yellow Maple Valley, while the other group chased after us. In order to protect our continued retreat, I require a squad to follow me and draw them away. As I block them, those who remain will follow those that I assign and continue their escape from the State of Yue.” Martial Uncle Huang said in an ice-cold tone.

Their hearts trembled upon hearing his words.

They weren’t fools. Being assigned to block the Devil Dao would most likely result in death!

Although a majority of them evaded his gaze, Martial Uncle Huang started pointing without restraint. In a single breath, he had picked over twenty Foundation Establishment cultivators.

While the small old man managed to escape calamity, Han Li was unfortunately among those chosen!

Those that were chosen became deathly pale, but they didn’t dare to utter any words of refusal.

With a wave of an arm, Martial Uncle Huang sent the others to continue their journey, leaving Han Li and company behind.

“We are pressed for time! I know that you all don’t think very favorably of this assignment, but I don’t need to you stake your all to meet the enemy. I only request that you mount an ambush and draw their attention away from our retreating forces.” The middle-aged man said with a relaxed tone. He then took out about twenty green jade slips.

“Memorize the map inside the jade slip and then destroy it! If you are later separated, you will be able to regroup again in accordance to the map.” Martial Uncle Huang waved his hand and streaks of green light shot toward the twenty-plus cultivators and floated in front of them.

Having heard Martial Uncle Huang’s words, the others’ complexion improved visibly. Since they didn’t have to rigidly block the Devil Dao, their chances of survival were much higher. As a result, they all grabbed the jade slips and started to memorize the map contained within.

Han Li only skimmed through the jade slip in passing and didn’t take it to heart.

After all, this assignment to remain behind and block the Devil Dao was a rare opportunity to escape. Han Li was unwilling to stay with Yellow Maple Valley to the very end for a later opportunity to reach Core Formation.

Chapter 348: Heavenfire Technique

After seeing that everyone had crushed their jade slips, Martial Uncle Huang revealed an expression of satisfaction.

His hands then flashed with yellow light, and a small foot-long banner appeared in his hand. The banner was white and glowed with a yellow radiance, rendering its embroidery difficult to discern.

“I will use the Cloud-Wind Banner to mask the traces of your presence. When the enemy arrives, launch your ambush when they are most vulnerable.”

Martial Uncle Huang then lightly shook the small flag in his hands, releasing countless strands of milky-white vapor from his flag. In the blink of an eye, a huge, hundred-meter-wide cloud had appeared, concealing Han Li and company within.

Han Li and the other Foundation Establishment cultivators were pleasantly surprised by the sudden concealment! This cloud was exceptionally thick, but for some unknown reason, their vision wasn't obstructed in the least. It would serve as exceptionally good cover!

Martial Uncle Huang continued his casting, causing the cloud to further expand. Soon after, they could no longer see anything outside of the cloud.

Han Li was left speechless!

Although his magic tool “Azurefire Miasma” could also turn into a thick cloud, it was incomparable to the Cloud-Wind Banner. Not only was the scope of his Azurefire Miasma smaller, he could only use it on himself; anyone else within it would be poisoned.

With that thought, Han Li couldn’t help but take a look at Martial Uncle Huang.

He was sitting down cross-legged with his eyes shut in the cloud. Two Foundation Establishment cultivators were attentively standing behind him. It seemed that they were his bodyguards.

Han Li stared blankly for a moment. But soon after, he came to the realization that Martial Uncle Huang was using his spiritual sense to scout for enemies. As a Core Formation cultivator’s spiritual sense was great and could detect movements within a radius of a hundred kilometers, he should be capable of detecting them.

Having seen this, Han Li sat on his Divine Wind Boat and rested. The upcoming fight would be incredibly dangerous. Crooked Soul remained motionless behind him, appearing steadfast.

After two hours, Martial Uncle Huang spoke, “The enemy has arrived. We’re about a kilometer away from them. We need to intercept their advance.” He then took off without another word, bringing the cloud with him.

Everyone within the cloud naturally didn’t dare to leave its cover

and hurriedly followed after Martial Uncle Huang on their magic tools.

Han Li wrinkled his brow and took out his huge silver sword as he flew, giving it to Crooked Soul. Although he didn't know how useful it would be, it was still better to try to increase one's fighting capabilities.

“We are here. The enemy will soon arrive. Everyone, prepare yourselves!” Martial Uncle Huang commanded. After a short moment, the cloud had arrived in the enemy's path.

Suddenly, everyone's magic tools started shining, and they began to apply defensive magic techniques to their bodies. Sparkles of light flashed from within the cloud.

Han Li took out two azure-red spheres and lightly bumped them together. With a muffled thump, a concentrated azure-red mist was released from the two spheres, quickly enveloping Han Li. In the blink of an eye, a huge, twenty-meter-wide azure-red cloud completely concealed Han Li.

Han Li had unexpectedly used the Azurefire Miasma to form a cloud as a defense while still within Martial Uncle Huang's cloud. The nearby cultivators were stunned, not understanding Han Li's intentions.

Han Li didn't pay attention to his fellow sect members. He grabbed his tortoise shell with one hand and held a common blue throwing knife in the other hand instead of taking out his Black

Dragon Claws.

Han Li clearly understood what he was doing. In his mind, the more low-profile the magic tool, the better. Only then would he avoid any troublesome attention during the raid and easily make his escape.

Everyone waited attentively, and in the blink of an eye, ten minutes had passed. However, not a single enemy was found.

A majority of the waiting cultivators grew anxious and impatient. They couldn't help but look at Martial Uncle Huang with doubt.

The valiant Martial Uncle Huang now also appeared doubtful, but after a moment of thought, he unhurriedly said, "Everyone, do not worry. I will launch a search with my spiritual sense."

As he sat down, a deafening series of booms suddenly sounded out from the sky before he could even start. The sounds increased in intensity and occurrence until they appeared to be coming from all directions.

Alarmed by the sudden noise, the cultivators quickly turned their heads to the sky. What they saw left their faces pale.

The sky had turned red at an unknown time, and all of the clouds had turned into fiery-red ash clouds as if they were made of boiling lava. The huge rumbling sounds came from bursting pockets of lava within the clouds.

“What’s going on?!” Someone to the side of Han Li shouted in horror.

“Everyone, be careful! This is the intermediate high-grade “Heavenfire” magic technique. Lava will begin dripping from above, with each drop equivalent to a Foundation Establishment cultivator’s strike! If you do not block it, you will turn into ashes.” As Senior Uncle Huang said this, his face became extremely unsightly.

It was clear that the ambushers had now become the ambushed.

“Then let’s quickly escape! I have no intention of trying to block this!” Someone said with panic. He was prepared to fly off immediately.

“It is already too late! The magic technique is complete, and we are now trapped within it. Everyone, gather together and form a defensive barrier!” Martial Uncle Huang’s eyes flashed with coldness as he gave his commands with fierce resolution.

Having heard his orders, the others suddenly understood the situation and hastily acted together. With a flash of blue light, they erected a huge light barrier.

In nearly the same instant that the barrier was formed, the intermediate high-grade magic technique started to wreak devastation from the sky. It struck down upon Han Li and company, but the barrier they had just erected managed to easily

repel the attacks.

However, that was only the beginning of the rain of lava. Although the majority of the attacks missed, a significant amount of damage had been inflicted upon the light barrier, causing it to spark with red and blue light.

Initially, the group felt that they had energy to spare, but the lava soon began dropping at an increased rate and in larger quantities. In turn, the group's spiritual power expenditure also quickly increased. At this rate, they wouldn't be able to last for long.

The barrier of blue light gradually weakened from the assault.

Fortunately, this formidable magic technique ended as quickly as it began. Just as the barrier was on the verge of collapse, the Heavenfire Technique reached its end, and the clouds of lava disappeared without a trace, causing the Yellow Maple Valley cultivators to feel relieved.

However, their happy expressions immediately froze a moment later.

At some point during the attack, they had been silently surrounded by nearly a hundred cultivators. From their attire, they appeared to be from the Devil Dao. They were all looking down at the Yellow Maple Valley cultivators with a trace of ridicule.

The Yellow Maple Valley cultivators were both furious and frightened! However, the surrounding cultivators were only Foundation Establishment disciples. Not a single Core Formation cultivator was amongst them, causing the Yellow Maple Valley cultivators to sigh in relief. Although they had consumed much of their magic power, they still had a Core Formation cultivator among them. There should be no need to be afraid.

“How did you know we were here? My Cloud-Wind Banner should’ve concealed us from your spiritual sense!” Martial Uncle Huang asked with a sunken expression.

“I can answer that!” A slurred, coquettish voice came from above, causing Martial Uncle Huang’s heart to tremble in fear. He hastily looked toward the sky and saw a man and woman floating down from above.

The man had a head full of white hair and was shriveled to the bone, appearing as if the slightest breeze could knock him over. The woman was seductively attractive with a slender waist and generous bottom. Every one of her movements tugged at the heart.

Han Li silently cursed. The two in the air were actually Core Formation cultivators. Their appearance brought greater trouble.

“Fair Rouge and Skeleton?” Upon seeing the two, Martial Uncle Huang’s pupils shrank.

Without waiting for their reply, he suddenly waved his Cloud-Wind banner and caused the white mist to completely disappear,

revealing Han Li and company. While facing such powerful enemies, he naturally couldn't afford to look after Han Li and his other martial nephews.

“Heehee, I truly didn't expect that Fellow Daoist would recognize this couple! This isn't fair! You recognized us husband and wife, but we are rather unfamiliar with Fellow Daoist. However, I have heard of an ice-cold fellow from Yellow Maple Valley that had a very interesting magic treasure called the Cloud-Wind Banner. Could your esteemed self be him?” The seductive woman chuckled as if she didn't possess the slightest hostility.

But upon seeing the woman's delicate, charming smile, Martial Uncle Huang's expression only grew colder. He continued to stare at her in silence.

The woman faintly smiled in response to his silence, before suddenly shouting, “How utterly boring. Kill them!”

“Alright. Since Junior Martial Sister wants his life, I will naturally obey!” The shriveled ‘Skeleton’ chuckled and sinisterly said.

At that moment, Han Li and company heard their Martial Uncle's voice transmission in their ears, “Once I act, immediately break through their enclosure. Run away as far as you can.”

Martial Uncle Huang's voice was completely devoid of emotion.

Chapter 349: Fleeing To Yuanwu

Immediately after Han Li and company heard Martial Uncle Huang's voice, the Cloud-Wind Banner suddenly flashed with blinding yellow light. The burst of radiance contracted and then swelled before exploding.

A white mist even thicker than before madly rushed forth from the banner and enveloped both enemies and allies in the blink of an eye.

“You're courting death!”

A roar from the human skeleton traveled through the fog along with the furious, charming voice of the seductive woman. Afterwards, the sound of huge explosions started echoing through the mist. It was obvious that Martial Uncle Huang was currently fighting with the two Devil Dao Core Formation cultivators.

Han Li and company didn't allow this opportunity provided by their Martial Uncle to slip by. At nearly the same moment that the mist appeared, the Yellow Maple Valley cultivators scattered in all directions, flying off on their magic tools.

Relying on the Divine Wind Boat's great speed, Han Li shot through the fog.

Han Li chose to flee in the direction that held the most enemy cultivators. Although the enemies there were numerous, Han Li felt that their magic power and cultivation was weaker, thereby

being the best direction to break through.

However, many of his fellow sect members didn't understand this, and the majority of them chose the directions that held fewer enemies. Han Li could only look on with disapproval.

In an instant, Han Li had taken advantage of the chaotic situation to arrive at the edge of the encirclement.

The mist at the edge of the enclosure was much weaker, allowing the Devil Dao cultivators to notice Han Li's rushing figure. But because Han Li was using the Azurefire Miasma, they were only able to see a large cloud of azure-red smoke, leaving them stunned.

However, three nearby Devil Dao cultivators immediately came to their senses and simultaneously launched their attacks. A streak of golden light, three streaks of yellow light, and a large ball of black Qi shot toward Han Li's direction.

Han Li snorted and pointed to the tortoise shell, causing it to immediately swell to several times its original size. At that same moment, he madly poured more spiritual power into the Divine Wind Boat in an attempt to fly as fast as possible.

Han Li had already come to the conclusion that now was not the time to be tangled up in a battle. If other enemies were allowed to ensnare him, he would no longer be able to run. Therefore, he poured most of his magic power into his flying magic tool as it was a race against time to escape. This was only possible due to the great confidence Han Li had in his tortoise shell as it was even

harder than his white scale shield.

While Han Li was still thinking, the golden and yellow streaks of light collided with the tortoise shell. Just as Han Li had expected, they were forcibly blocked. However, the ball of black Qi was unexpectedly tricky, and it suddenly split in two when it smashed against the tortoise shell. The halves slipped around the sides of the tortoise shell before reforming. Although it had been delayed for a moment, it still arrived at Han Li's side. The ball of black Qi turned into a ten-meter-large ghost head, attempting to swallow Han Li along with his Divine Wind Boat.

Han Li sneered in response. With a single wave of his arm, over a hundred fireballs appeared, tearing the ghost head apart in an instant. Over the course of the war, Han Li had grown quite familiar with such elementary Devil Dao arts.

Taking advantage of the opening, Han Li exhaled and sped past the evaporated ghost head. In an instant, he had broken through the enclosure, leaving the Devil Dao cultivators behind him.

Although their attacks were not successful, the Devil Dao cultivators were naturally unwilling to just let him go. They cursed before hastily chasing after Han Li on their own flying magic tools. However, Han Li didn't pay any attention to his pursuers, only focusing on flying at the greatest speed possible.

As Han Li expected, the curses of the Devil Dao cultivators sounded further away and rarer as time passed. Flight magic tools capable of such speed as the Divine Wind Boat were seldom seen after all. Finally, after a mad rush lasting a few hours, not a single

person could be seen behind him.

Even with this, Han Li still didn't dare to grow complacent and continued speeding along for a moment before slowing down and carefully examining his surroundings. He then stamped his foot on his Divine Wind boat, shooting away once more.

Han Li's current condition wasn't very good. Almost half of his magic power had been consumed in the creation of the united defensive barrier. With the additional magic power consumed during his mad rush, he was in dire need to replenish his magic power! Otherwise, he would be in dire straits if he were to encounter an enemy.

With that in mind, Han Li descended onto a desolate mountain and put away his Azurefire Miasma. He then found a concealed location behind a huge rock and sat down cross-legged behind it.

Afterwards, he took out a blue mid-grade spirit stone from his storage pouch and started to replenish his magic power.

Crooked Soul stood by his side and kept watch.

Not long after Han Li sat down, a streak of red light flew across the sky in a panic. Soon after, six streaks of black and green light chased after it.

It was obvious that an unlucky person had managed to get snared a second time.

Han Li didn't pay further attention to them and slowly closed his eyes, his mind sinking into a state of emptiness to recover magic power at even greater speed.

After an indeterminate length of time had passed, Han Li opened his eyes. Having nearly recovered the entirety of his magic power, he was unwilling to stay here for even a second longer.

He looked up at the sky and saw that it was now dusk; he was just in time to make his escape under the cover of night.

However, Han Li didn't make any haphazard movements. Instead, he took a moment to carefully observe his surroundings with his spiritual sense and confirmed that there were no Devil Dao cultivators nearby.

It seemed that they were now pursuing the main Yellow Maple Valley group, after having dealt with the failed ambush.

With the enemy's strength in mind, Han Li shook his head. Everything pointed to disaster for the main group.

Han Li gave it no more thought and released his Divine Wind Boat. After making sure of the direction to the State of Yuanwu, Han Li and Crooked Soul took off.

Although a majority of the cultivators from the State of Yuanwu had met their end in the State of Yue, it would still take several

months for the Six Devil Dao sects to fully conquer the State of Yue. For the time being, the State of Yuanwu could still be considered safe.

Han Li didn't plan to go to the meeting location and assemble with the main group. The main group may have already been pursued by the Devil Dao; to go there now would just be looking for more trouble.

Furthermore, Han Li could take advantage of this opportunity to search for a new place to cultivate. If he were to follow Yellow Maple Valley to another country, he would only be a high-level steward at best. Han Li was unwilling to live such a life.

If Han Li's thoughts were correct, after the Devil Dao annexed these countries, they would eventually gather their strength and resume fighting against the Righteous Dao Alliance.

When that time came, the whole Heavenly South Region would no longer be safe!

This was in opposition to Han Li's intention to peacefully cultivate!

If he were to go the State of Yuanwu now and see how the situation developed, couldn't he both find out whether or not the transportation formation could be restored and still see how the situation unfolded?

If the circumstances were truly terrible, he planned to use the transportation formation to travel to a different land and avoid the upcoming war.

As Han Li silently sunk into contemplation, his Divine Wind Boat turned into a streak of white light, and he disappeared into the horizon.

Two days later, Han Li arrived at the border between the State of Yue and Yuanwu after taking a meandering route.

He turned his head to look at the mountains of the State of Yue and lightly sighed before flying into Yuanwu along with Crooked Soul.

Han Li couldn't have known that half a day later, a squad of several tens of Devil Dao cultivators would be stationed at this location. They were responsible for guarding fifty kilometers along the border to intercept any State of Yue cultivators that intended to enter the State of Yuanwu.

Once Han Li entered the State of Yuanwu, he first headed toward Golden Horse City.

After four days, he eventually arrived at the west hills of Golden Horse City.

Observing carefully from the sky, Han Li eventually found Qi Yunxiao's residence and slowly descended.

Han Li jumped off the boat, sweeping his gaze in every direction. What he saw left him stunned.

The stone rooms leaned at an unsteady angle, and all the rocks and azure bamboo were broken and scattered. They were most likely destroyed.

In addition, the defensive formations [Qi Yunxiao](#) had laid out were broken through by force.

Qi Yunxiao was the Qi Condensation cultivator that gave him the Five Phases Reversal Formation. Last mentioned in chapter 275

Han Li's face darkened, and he flipped his hand, taking out a magic tool. He then walked over to the mostly toppled rooms.

Although it seemed like this had occurred long ago, it was still prudent to be cautious!

Han Li searched the rooms, and among the destroyed interiors, he found a thoroughly rotted corpse.

Han Li pinched his nose and took a long, careful look at the corpse's face.

He wrinkled his brow. The corpse wasn't Qi Yunxiao but rather the loyal shopkeeper in charge of his store.

Much to his relief, Han Li found no other corpses in the other rooms.

After Han Li finished searching, his expression suddenly grew cold. His body turned into a blur, instantly reappearing on the Divine Wind Boat. He then turned his gaze toward the southern sky.

Above the southern hills, two streaks of deep blue light shot straight toward his location.

A moment later, they landed not far in front of Han Li. Once the light faded away, an old man and a youth were revealed.

The old man had a common appearance, aside from his thin, slender eyes and goatee. He was a Foundation Establishment cultivator and wore an expression of bewilderment.

The other person was a handsome youth that appeared to be about twenty years old. He was fiercely staring at Han Li with a baleful gaze, despite being only a Qi Condensation cultivator.

Chapter 350: Instant Kill

Han Li calmly looked at the two without speaking a word. However, he clearly understood that these two most likely had something to do with Qi Yunxiao's residence being destroyed.

In response to Han Li's silence, the youth couldn't help but ask, "Who is your esteemed self, and what is your relationship with that fellow named Qi?"

Upon hearing this, Han Li merely gave the youth a cold glance before ignoring him and turning his gaze back to the old man. It was obvious that with regard to cultivation, the old man was the one who was truly in charge.

When the youth saw Han Li disregard him, he was furious. Although he knew that Han Li was a Foundation Establishment cultivator, his clan was one of the most prestigious clans in the State of Yuanwu. He had never been treated like this before.

Furthermore, due to the matter regarding Qi Yunxiao, he was already filled with anger. Thus, he clenched his teeth and wanted to release his magic tools. But just as he was about to move his arm, the old man grabbed onto it, stopping him.

"Not yet! We still don't know who this person is. We must find that out first before we take further action!" The old man stated with a calm expression.

The youth then glanced somewhat suspiciously at Crooked Soul,

who stood behind Han Li. Crooked Soul didn't have the aura of a living person, yet he could feel magic power fluctuations from his body. He felt that it was inconceivable.

When Han Li heard this, his eyes narrowed. The old man was a mid Foundation Establishment cultivator yet he spoke as if he were not to be trifled with, causing Han Li to grow slightly apprehensive.

“Were you the ones who destroyed this place?” Han Li asked with poise.

“What relation does Fellow Daoist have with Qi Yunxiao? Are you from the Qi Clan?” The old man responded to Han Li's question with his own.

Han Li slightly wrinkled his brow. It seemed the other party wouldn't honestly answer him as he only exchanged one question for another.

“Seems like we both don't wish to answer one another. Wouldn't it be better to exchange answers with each other? That way we can waste less of each other's time.” Han Li asked with raised eyebrows.

The old man was surprised for a moment. But after pondering for a moment, he agreed.

“Since I was the one who proposed this, how about you ask

first?” Han Li said insipidly.

“Is your esteemed self a member of the Qi Clan?” The old man immediately asked without a trace of politeness.

In turn, Han Li responded without the slightest of hesitation: “I am not!”

Having heard Han Li’s resolute reply, both the old man and the youth were surprised and revealed an expression of doubt.

“Is Qi Yunxiao currently dead or alive?” Han Li unhurriedly asked.

“He’s still alive!” The old man hesitated for a moment before answering.

The words “still alive”, immediately put Han Li’s heart at ease.

“What relationship does your esteemed self have with Qi Yunxiao?” The old man cautiously asked.

“I have a business deal with him,” Han Li coldly responded.

“A business deal?” Surprise flashed through the old man’s eyes.

“Where is Qi Yunxiao currently?” Although Han Li asked this

casually, he was feeling quite worried.

“I cannot tell you this!” The old man instantly rejected.

“Then I will change the question. Why did you attack Qi Yunxiao?” Han Li immediately asked another question without batting an eye at his refusal.

“He killed members of our Fu Clan. Why shouldn’t we kill him?” The youth to the side quickly answered with a sneer.

The old man wrinkled his brow, revealing a trace of annoyance, but he didn’t say anything more.

“Fu Clan!” When Han Li heard this, he was instantly reminded of those Qi Condensation cultivators he had killed while saving [Xin Ruyin](#); he now felt a great desire to kill.

Qi Yunxiao’s unrequited love and master of formation spells.
Introduced in Chapter 277

“So it was like that! However, there are only two of you here. If the Qi Clan were to come here with a formidable character, how would you be able to match them?” Han Li casually asked this while appearing indifferent.

“How could any foreign cultivator sent by the Qi Clan oppose the two of us from the Fu Clan? Could it be that we are not enough?” The youth proudly answered Han Li’s inquiry.

“So, you two are here alone?” Han Li suddenly asked with a deep voice.

“Why are you asking this?” The youth was thinking of how to respond with an angry expression, but the old man at his side suddenly asked this with suspicion.

However, it was already too late. Han Li suddenly raised his arms and shot two streaks of black light toward the youth. Afterwards, he patted his storage pouch, releasing over ten streaks of white light. In the blink of an eye, those lights transformed into puppet beasts and puppet soldiers.

Once those puppets appeared, they immediately released a mad barrage of light beams and light arrows.

When the old man saw this, he felt aghast. His body instantly blurred and appeared beside the youth, summoning a copper coin magic tool in front of him. In an instant, it grew to the size of a table and blocked the incoming attacks.

A series of explosions could be heard as numerous beams of light struck the copper coin. Each strike pushed the old man further and further back, much to his dismay.

But in the next moment, the youth next to him let out a miserable shriek, causing the old man to hastily turn his head in dread. But as he turned his head, his neck suddenly felt cold and everything went dark.

After the old man's headless body fell to the ground, Han Li was the only one remaining in the air with a faintly shining thread tied to the ring finger of his right hand.

Just a moment ago, Han Li took advantage of the massive, eye-catching assault to conceal his movements. By using the Smoke Shifting Steps, he was able to travel over sixty meters away from his Divine Wind Boat in a few breaths, arriving behind the two. Then, with a wave of his string, he was able to easily behead them.

Han Li had found this battle to be as easy as dusting off his clothes!

Han Li found it quite humorous. In a battle between Foundation Establishment cultivators, elemental defensive barriers basically weren't used because they were unable to block the attacks of top grade magic techniques. They required too much time to activate, and they were far too expensive. Thus, most people used defensive magic tools to protect themselves instead of defensive light barriers that they felt were useless.

That kind of thinking had given Han Li many openings to take advantage of. This was especially apparent when Han Li originally fought the Devil Dao cultivators at the border as a majority of his kills had died in this manner.

Now that he thought about it, this particular killing technique was quite similar to that of the Black Fiend School's Blood Servant, Ice Demon. It was as fast as lightning; by the time they hear the thunder, it was already too late. Unfortunately, this technique could only be used on the ground. Otherwise, Han Li would have

no one to fear among Foundation Establishment cultivators.

Han Li lightly shook his head, feeling a great sense of lamentation in his heart!

He walked in front of the headless corpses and collected their storage pouches. After he inspected them with his spiritual sense, he felt some disappointment.

Although they possessed three top grade magic tools, they were of common quality. Han Li did not have much use for them. On the other hand, that copper coin was a rarely seen defensive magic tool.

With that in mind, Han Li restored it to its original size and had it fly into his hand. After happily admiring it for a moment, he flung two small fireballs toward the headless corpses and turned them into ashes. Back in the boat with Crooked Soul, Han Li circled through the vicinity once before taking to the skies.

This time, he would go to that small mountain with Xin Ruyin's residence. He hoped her home was well hidden enough that it hadn't encountered any mishaps.

Six hours later, Han Li arrived at the nameless mountain of Xin Ruyin's residence.

When Han Li saw that the fog above the mountain was intact and the same as before, he felt overjoyed.

After musing for short while, Han Li didn't dare to fly down. Instead, he flew halfway up the mountain before taking out a sound transmission talisman. He then softly whispered a few words into it before throwing it out.

The sound transmission talisman turned into a fiery streak of light and flew towards the mountain, suddenly disappearing from sight. Soon after, a large portion of the fog rose and completely enveloped him.

Han Li stood still as he saw a scene bloom before him, leaving him surrounded by gargantuan trees over three hundred meters tall. He couldn't help but feel shocked, feeling like an ant among the huge trees.

Still, he knew that once Xin Ruyin received the sound transmission talisman, she should be quick to come meet him.

As expected, the huge tree illusions turned into thick fog a short moment later. Then the fog parted and revealed a three meter wide passageway.

The passage was remarkably long. After traveling for over two hundred meters, he was finally able to faintly see its opening and couldn't help but grow excited.

But when he was about twenty meters away from the exit, he suddenly heard a hoarse woman's voice: "Senior Han, who is that person behind you? You shouldn't be bringing strangers to this

place.”

Chapter 351: Qi Yunxiao's Death

When Han Li heard this, he faintly smiled and immediately explained, “Young Miss Xin has misunderstood. This individual by my side isn’t a living person. He’s just a corpse that I had refined. Once Young Miss Xin inspects him with her spiritual sense, it will be made clear.”

After Han Li said this, he took the initiative to stop and wait for Xin Ruyin to recognize Crooked Soul as a Jiangshi.

A short moment later, Xin Ruyin responded, “Ah, I was mistaken. Senior Han, please come in!”

Xin Ruyin’s tone was apologetic but Han Li paid it no mind, flying forward on his Divine Wind Boat with a smile.

Just as Han Li flew forward, the scene before him brightened as the bamboo rooms that he had seen on his previous trip appeared once more.

Two woman were standing in front of the bamboo rooms: Xin Ruyin and her pretty maid.

While both were wearing pure white clothes, Xin Ruyin’s style of dress left Han Li stunned.

“Widow Xin pay her respects to Senior Han.”

When Xin Ruyin saw Han Li arrive, she stepped forward and gracefully greeted him. However, her haggard appearance raised Han Li's suspicions.

“There is no need for Young Lady Xin to be so courteous.” Han Li continued on with a few polite niceties.

At this moment, the young maid behind Xin Ruyin stepped forward and greeted Han Li.

Han Li inattentively nodded his head in response.

It was obvious that Xin Ruyin didn't intend to stand there and have a long chat with Han Li. With a forced smile, she led Han Li to one of the larger bamboo rooms.

Upon entering the room, Han Li was left dumbstruck.

Right beside the door, there was a table with a pitch black memorial tablet with the words “Husband Qi Yunxiao” carved into it in large characters. There was a small incense burner in front of the memorial tablet with several lit incense sticks slowly releasing smoke.

Having seen this, how could Han Li not know what had happened?

Han Li was beyond surprised to find that Qi Yunxiao had actually passed away.

After he had recovered from his shock, he lightly sighed and took the initiative to approach the table. After taking out an incense stick, lighting it, and paying his respects, he placed it inside the incense burner.

“Young Lady Xin, how did this happen?” After he finished paying his respects, Han Li turned his head and asked in a soft voice.

“There is much to say. How about I give Senior Han a proper explanation in another room?” Xin Ruyin said with a feeble voice as the corner of her eyes reddened.

As of now, Xin Ruyin was no longer the intelligent and shrewd woman he remembered. He only saw a pitiful young woman.

In response, Han Li silently nodded his head.

Xin Ruyin then led Han Li to a neighboring room and sat down.

The young maid quickly steeped a pot of tea for Han Li and poured him a cup.

Han Li lightly sipped the fragrant tea before setting down the cup and speaking with a solemn voice, “I truly didn’t expect that after several months, Fellow Daoist Qi would encounter mishaps. The Heavens truly enjoy toying with men! Ah yes, when did Fellow Daoist Qi and Young Lady Xin marry? Had I known about it, I definitely would have sent a gift.”

Xin Ruyin bitterly smiled in response. Without waiting for her to speak, her maid answered on her behalf.

“Senior, my clan’s young madam decided to voluntarily live as Young Master Qi’s widow after his death.”

Han Li was left utterly shocked and couldn’t help but gaze at Xin Ruyin in astonishment.

“Young Mei speaks truly! I have decided to observe widowhood on Young Master Qi’s behalf.” Xin Ruyin confirmed this, slowly nodding her head in response to Han Li’s gaze of astonishment.

“This...” Han Li was left speechless.

“This one has received lifesaving kindness from Young Master Qi on numerous occasions; a debt that can’t possibly be paid back. If Young Master Qi were still alive, it would only be a matter of time before I married him. Now, I am merely doing what I should!” As she calmly said this, Xin Ruyin reached out with her flawless hand and lightly pulled away a strand of her beautiful hair that laid against her forehead.

Han Li naturally had nothing suitable to say in response. Xin Ruyin then continued, detachedly giving Han Li an explanation of how Qi Yunxiao’s death came to be.

Due to Han Li’s exhortations, Qi Yunxiao and Xin Ruyin were

very careful and rarely went outside after he left. Nevertheless, after two months, Xin Ruyin lacked some direly needed materials to research the spell formation and had no choice but to make a trip to a nearby market city.

This matter had unexpectedly been found out by Qi Yunxiao. As someone who was wholeheartedly infatuated with Xin Ruyin, he offered to make the trip for her.

However, they couldn't possibly have known that the cultivators Han Li had slaughtered to save Xin Ruyin were actually juniors from one of the greatest cultivation clans of the State of Yuanwu, the Fu Clan.

As many juniors of their lineage had disappeared without reason, the Fu Clan naturally pursued the matter to the finest thread.

As a result, a few Fu Clan cultivators wandering nearby had come across Qi Yunxiao who had just recently emerged.

Had Qi Yunxiao been shrewd or experienced enough, he would've been able to deal with any situation that arose.

But unfortunately, he was far too naive and inexperienced.

After only being asked a few questions related to the disappearance, he lost himself to panic and aroused the suspicions of the Fu Clan members. They immediately wanted to arrest him and bring him back for interrogation.

Naturally, Qi Yunxiao didn't wait for himself to be captured. With the formidable magic tools he had on hand, he forcibly escaped from the Fu Clan Qi Condensation cultivators and fled back to his residence.

As such, Qi Yunxiao had doomed himself to calamity.

The Fu Clan cultivators were able to quickly track him back to his residence. However, the great formation he had laid down managed to severely injure or kill over ten of their cultivators. In their fury, the Fu Clan had actually dispatched a Core Formation expert.

After half a day of fierce attacks, they were able to forcibly break through his great formation.

However, no one had expected that Qi Yunxiao would hastily lay down an even more ferocious illusion formation behind his first formation while the tide was against him. He managed to trap the Core Formation cultivator within, giving him the opportunity to escape.

Naturally, the other Fu Clan cultivators weren't going to let him go so easily.

Although Qi Yunxiao was able to break through their siege by using the remnants of his formation spell, he sustained mortal wounds in the process, and his loyal shopkeeper had died as well. Shortly after arriving at Xin Ruyin's residence, Qi Yunxiao took his

last breath.

The Fu Clan was unaware of this and resentfully searched for Qi Yunxiao at every location. In addition, they had dispatched experts to monitor his residence.

In this case, it was the old man and the youth from the Fu Clan that Han Li had killed.

After hearing Xin Ruyin's account, Han Li felt a slight twinge of sadness.

Although Han Li wasn't a close friend with Qi Yunxiao by any means, he still felt that he was a pretty decent person.

To think that he would die so young; the world was truly a fickle place.

"Ah, Senior Han must've come here for the ancient transportation formation!" Having finished her account, Xin Ruyin suddenly mentioned this.

"Oh, that matter isn't urgent..."

Han Li spoke with embarrassment.

After all, her husband had just died. This was not the appropriate time to inquire about such matters.

“I’ve just about restored the transportation formation. It should be finished in a month!” Xin Ruyin continued, not seeming to mind Han Li’s embarrassment.

“Really?” Han Li couldn’t help but grow excited and revealed a somewhat happy expression.

“Yes, really. Not only will I restore the transportation formation, but I also have two things to give to Senior Han!” Xin Ruyin calmly said, taking two jade boxes out of her storage pouch and setting them on the table.

“What’s this?” Han Li blankly stared on in surprise.

“One of the boxes contains《Yunxiao’s Insights》, my husband’s collection of tool refinement records. The other box contains a large amount of books on the Dao of Formation spells and my expertise in formation spells. I hope that Senior Han will accept these items.” Xin Ruyin faintly said.

Han Li’s heart trembled. After taking a look at the two jade boxes, he looked at Xin Ruyin with a calm expression and asked, “What do you want, Young Lady Xin? Why do you want to give such precious items to me? Please, speak bluntly!”

Han Li’s voice held a trace of coldness.

“I am giving these items as a gift to Senior Han in return for a

promise!” Xin Ruyin didn’t avoid Han Li’s gaze, revealing an unwavering expression.

“This promise being...?” Although Han Li could faintly guess what she wanted, he still asked this with a heavy tone.

“If Senior Han were to one day enter Core Formation, I wish for Senior Han to thoroughly exterminate the Fu Clan from the State of Yuanwu on my and Qi Yunxiao’s behalf.”

Xin Ruyin’s voice was as cold as ice frozen for countless years. When Han Li heard this, the resentment contained within her words caused even his heart to tremble.

Chapter 352: Promise

Han Li didn't immediately refuse or agree. Instead, he tightly wrinkled his brow and lowered his head in silence, weighing the potential gains and losses.

Truth be told, Han Li was unwilling to agree.

As of current, Han Li held little interest in spell formation and tool refinement techniques. Only after he successfully reached Core Formation would he have the time to research such things. In addition, he was unwilling to provoke a huge cultivator clan for no reason, not to mention that he didn't have the ability to do so.

"I understand that this request is overreaching, but Ruyin truly doesn't have any other way." Xin Ruyin gave a bleak smile with a pale complexion.

"Elder Brother Qi's death by the Fu Clan was because of the incident that I brought about. If I do not avenge my husband, then I wouldn't have the face to see him after I die; I would prefer to go to hell!" Xin Ruyin softly whispered with a pleading tone.

When Han Li heard her say 'die', he couldn't help but raise his eyebrows as he suddenly thought of something. He suddenly raised his head, taking a careful look at Xin Ruyin's complexion and leaving Xin Ruyin stunned in response.

"There is something amiss with your complexion. Let me see your veins." Han Li spoke in an irrefutable tone, greatly surprising

Xin Ruyin.

A queer glint flashed from her eyes. After a moment of hesitation, she obediently handed Han Li her flawless wrist.

Han Li impolitely brought two fingers to her wrist and poured a strand of Spiritual Qi into her body.

A long while later, Han Li's expression became unsightly.

“Are you aware that your blood vessels have completely withered away? If this is not addressed, you will die within two years!” Han Li coldly said after withdrawing his hand.

Xin Ruyin faintly smiled in response to Han Li's assertion.

“Of course I know this. How could I not know about my own body? My constitution is of the Dragon's Cry, a male body wrongly born as female. If someone with this constitution were to forcefully cultivate, their meridians would gradually wither away along with their lifespan. For me to have lived this long was by mere luck. Originally, I had hoped to find an ancient formula to cure this illness. However, I failed, merely wasting the many spiritual medicines that Elder Brother Qi had searched for in vain!” Xin Ruyin revealed an expression of self-mockery.

“Young Madam!” Xin Ruyin's maid couldn't help but shout out with sadness from behind her.

“It’s nothing, Little Mei! I am only going to see Elder Brother Qi a bit sooner. This is exactly what I desire!” Xin Ruyin unexpectedly consoled her maid with a peaceful expression.

Han Li’s expression grew soft and for some unknown reason, he truly felt pity toward her. But unfortunately, Han Li couldn’t do anything about Xin Ruyin’s strange illness and could only watch on as her life and beauty withered away.

“Since Senior Han now knows of this matter, he should understand why I have acted in this manner. Although Senior is currently only a Foundation Establishment cultivator, you are the sole person familiar with Elder Brother Qi and me that has a chance of avenging him. I don’t require Senior to swear an oath. I only want a promise, so that I may pass away with ease.” Xin Ruyin returned to her previously calm demeanor and nonchalantly mentioned the matter of vengeance again.

Han Li stroked his nose with all his strength, finding himself in a rather difficult position. But after a moment of hard thought, he suddenly asked, “What about those from Fellow Daoist Qi’s clan?”

“Humph, the Qi Clan? They are merely a common clan within the State of Yuanwu. How could they dare to offend the Fu Clan? Besides, Elder Brother Qi was only an external branch disciple driven out from the sect. They couldn’t be less concerned! As for me, I’ve learned everything from a nameless formation spell grandmaster. He was a rogue cultivator that had long since passed away.” Xin Ruyin understood what Han Li meant and explained her and Qi Yunxiao’s background to Han Li in a soft voice.

Han Li's mind grew quiet. He had truly thought that this woman had an alternative.

“Fine, I can give Young Lady Xin this promise! However, I will only act when I possess the ability to do so. If such an opportunity does not appear in my lifetime, will you regret it?” After pondering for a long while, Han Li took a deep breath and spoke in a heavy voice.

“That will be enough! So long as you can give me hope, it will do. Let me thank Senior Han in advance!” Xin Ruyin couldn't help but widely smile in response, suddenly appearing daintily beautiful.

Han Li was stunned as he took in her beauty. But soon after, he shook his head and bluntly swiped his sleeve across the table, causing two jade boxes to disappear without a trace into his storage pouch.

“Since you require another month to restore the transportation formation, then I will have to trouble Young Lady Xin in a month's time. I will now be taking my leave!” Han Li spoke unhurriedly as he stood up. With this gap of time available, he had quite a few matters to attend to.

“This one pays Senior her respects!” Xin Ruyin said respectfully without further urging Han Li to stay.

As a result, Han Li flew to the Heavenly Star Sect's market city with Crooked Soul in tow.

After a day, Han Li arrived in the vicinity of the market city. After he took out a cloak from his storage pouch and covered his face, he entered the market city with a swagger, bringing Crooked Soul along with him.

As Han Li walked through the streets of the market city, he was astonished to find so many cultivators trading and bustling about.

There were several times as many cultivators compared to the last time he came here. In addition to the hurried atmosphere, there were also a few rarely seen Foundation Establishment cultivators within the city.

After pondering for a moment, Han Li's eyes flashed with thoughtfulness. But soon after, he tossed the matter to the back of his mind and went straight toward that magic tool store that helped him craft his magic tools on his previous trip. He had a few materials that could be refined into useful magic tools, thereby increasing his own strength.

That magic tool store still looked exactly the same as before. Even its arrogant signboard was completely the same.

Han Li entered the store with a faint smile.

The circumstances within the store caused Han Li's brow to slightly furrow.

The tiny store actually had six people standing and sitting

around. When they saw Han Li enter, they couldn't help but glance at him.

When Han Li saw them, he swept his cold gaze past them without a trace of politeness. In response, they immediately lowered their heads. As Qi Condensation cultivators, they naturally wouldn't dare to offend Han Li, a "Senior" Foundation Establishment cultivator.

But a man with a fiendish appearance sitting in a chair looked at Han Li without the slightest hint of fear. Although he was only in early Foundation Establishment, he didn't turn his gaze away.

Han Li didn't pay him any mind and walked over to the two store employees that were chatting.

"Is Store Owner Xu here?" Han Li calmly asked the burly man called "Dahei".

"Senior, who..." The burly man revealed an expression of doubt.

Han Li sighed and took out the Black Dragon Claws, revealing them to him. He was assisting at the side as this magic tool was created. There was no way he wouldn't have recognized it.

"So it turned out to be Senior! This one will call Master out." The burly man's eyes brightened, recognizing the Black Dragon Claws as Han Li had expected. He immediately apologized with a wide grin and hastily ran to the back courtyard.

Seeing that Han Li was the store owner's acquaintance, the others couldn't help but look at each other in shock. However, nobody dared to untactfully bother Han Li.

Not long after, the fully white-haired shop owner welcomed Han Li with a beaming smile. On his last trip, Han Li left him with a significant amount of rare materials. It was only natural for the old man to give him such a warm welcome.

"This small old man is honored to have Senior come to my shop once more! Does Senior wish to refine more magic tools?" After exchanging a few pleasantries, Old Man Xu impatiently asked with a face full of anticipation.

Han Li faintly smiled and deliberately swept his gaze past the other cultivators in the room.

"How foolish of me!" Shop Owner Xu exclaimed, immediately understanding what Han Li had meant. He then invited Han Li to the rear courtyard and excitedly led the way.

The others didn't dare to say anything, except for the large, fiendish man who snorted with dissatisfaction. He was greatly angered at how differently he was treated compared to Han Li, as he was also a Foundation Establishment cultivator who had even sought out this Tool Refinement Store.

In response to the large man's snort, Han Li shot an ice-cold glance at him.

Han Li had killed no small number of cultivators and unconsciously carried a murderous aura as a result. That single glance immediately caused the large man to feel as if his entire body had turned to ice, and he couldn't help but reveal an expression of terror.

Having seen the large man's expression had changed, Han Li didn't pay him any further attention and brought Crooked Soul along with him to the rear courtyard.

At that moment, Dahei cleverly stepped forward and apologized to the others, casually giving them an excuse in an attempt to placate their discontent.

“Did Senior bring back more materials?” When Han Li and Crooked Soul entered the rear courtyard, Shop Owner Xu glanced at Crooked Soul with slight surprise before impatiently asking Han Li.

Chapter 353: The Stardust Pavilion

Han Li wore a slight smile when he saw the old man's eagerness. He casually took out the materials-filled storage pouch and turned it upside down. A white light suddenly shone, and the materials Han Li obtained from the white spider and demon mantis poured out onto the ground.

“This is...”

The shop owner crouched over and gathered together the white spider's lower limbs, inspecting them with rapt attention. He revealed an expression of puzzlement.

Although the old man was a tool refining expert, he didn't understand much about rare, strange insects. As a result, even if he were able to see that the materials were unordinary, he was still left baffled.

Han Li smiled for a moment before giving him an explanation, “Most of these materials came from the limbs and shell of a white spider. There are also the wings and forelimbs of a huge demon mantis. They were both grade four demonic beasts. As for the mantis, it was a peak grade four demonic beast and was exceptionally powerful. I hope that your esteemed self will be able to properly make use of these materials. I had to spend quite a bit of effort to obtain them!”

“Materials obtained from grade four demonic beasts!?” The white-haired old man shouted in astonishment and immediately

sank into ecstasy.

Not to mention grade four demon beasts, even materials from grade two demon beasts were rarely seen.

“That’s right, Shop Owner Xu! However, for this set of magic tools, I have a particular request for what is to be created. I will only allow you to work with them if you are able to fulfill my request. Payment will be handled the same as before. If there are any leftover materials, you may keep a portion of them to do with as you please.” Han Li said calmly.

“Senior, please feel at ease. Regardless of the request, this small old man will comply! To be able to personally refine such top-grade materials, I didn’t spend my life pursuing the Dao of Tool Refinement in vain!” Shop Owner Xu then picked up the mantis arms and caressed them with a fanatical gaze.

Han Li was surprised to see him with such an expression, but his heart grew increasingly at ease. He spoke to the old man with a gentle tone, “The magic tools that I request you refine are rather unusual. I wish for you to refine the spider legs into a set of offensive magic tools. As for the mantis...”

.....

Two hours later, Han Li and Crooked Soul left the Tool Refinement Shop.

He had come to an agreement with Shop Owner Xu after the shop owner inspected the materials. Several days later, the shop owner would finish his plans for the methods of their refinement. At that time, Han Li would return with the materials and they would officially start their refinement.

But for now, Han Li had an opportunity to take a proper stroll around the market city. His suspicions were finally confirmed by an old man as he was browsing around.

It turned out that news of the defeat of the State of Yue and their two allied countries had spread to the State of Yuanwu. Regardless of whether they were from a cultivator clan or unaffiliated, all of those in the State of Yuanwu felt both uncertainty and premonitions of hardship.

Consequently, massive numbers of cultivators flocked to the market city. Many even brought along their rare treasures to trade for direly needed items, thereby increasing their strength to brave the upcoming catastrophe.

Within a short few days, all the market cities in the State of Yuanwu began to spread news of precious magic tools, pills, and other such items. A great number of cultivators were instantly attracted, leading to great furor within the market cities.

Naturally, Han Li couldn't let such a golden opportunity slip by him.

With that in mind, Han Li began to stroll around the shops,

taking a look in every direction.

As he had expected, there were far more high-quality goods for sale. But much to Han Li's surprise, there were very few top grade magic tools for sale. Still, it wasn't as if Han Li had any need for those common top grade magic tools.

After walking in nearly a full circle, Han Li had only bought a few uncommon medicinal ingredients that he hadn't seen before; there was nothing else of interest to him. He subsequently headed toward the heart of the market city, the "Stardust Pavilion".

Having traded in market cities several times, Han Li already knew that if he wanted to buy better goods, he would have to go to the larger, more imposing stores. Only they would have the power to acquire quality goods.

Though the small vendors might actually possess a few decent items, they had nothing compared to the collection of a large store.

Not long ago, he acquired many quality items from the "Thousand Treasures Pavilion" of the Yellow Maple Valley Market City.

With that line of thought, Han Li brought Crooked Soul along to the Heavenly Star Sect's Stardust Pavilion, a huge, hundred-meter-tall building.

Han Li was rendered speechless upon entering.

This was because there were over thirty cultivators bustling about on the first floor's hall. They were all surrounding several display counters, talking with red-clothed store employees. Not a single person noticed Han Li.

Han Li scratched the back of his head and absent-mindedly walked toward a display counter, looking around for the stairs to the second story.

Three Qi Condensation cultivators stood beside the display counter. One of them was continuously waving a white formation flag while speaking to the store employee in a dissatisfied mumble.

The Stardust Pavilion employee appeared to not mind at all. From the very start, he had been giving explanations with a wide smile on his face.

However, when these cultivators saw Han Li and Crooked Soul approach them, they immediately grew silent.

It was clear that they were very wary of unfamiliar cultivators.

When the flag-holding cultivator saw Han Li approach, he hastily brought out several tens of spirit stones to give to the store employee before hastily flying off with his friend.

Han Li gloomily gazed at them as they took off. He felt slightly at a loss!

But just a moment later, the store employee politely addressed Han Li, “Senior, my sincerest apologies! As this is the first floor, I’m afraid there is nothing of interest here. If Senior truly wishes to find suitable items to purchase, then the floors above the third would be best. Those floors specialize in receiving high-class cultivators.”

Initially, Han Li was somewhat startled, but he soon recovered his usual bearings. He asked indifferently, “Could you give me an introduction to the floors of the Stardust Pavilion?”

The employee appeared slightly surprised, but he respectfully agreed, “Of course. Since it’s Senior’s first time at our Stardust Pavilion, it’s only natural that I introduce our store to you.”

“Our Stardust Pavilion has a total of nine floors. The first seven are open to the public, and the last two are closed off to outsiders. The first three floors are for inferior Qi Condensation cultivators. Floors four through to six are for high-grade cultivators such as yourself. As for floors seven and higher, they are at the service of Core Formation cultivators.”

The employee quickly gave Han Li a general introduction to the store. Han Li nodded his head and then wordlessly walked straight toward the stairs to the second floor.

The second and third floors were a bit smaller than the first, but the arrangement was obviously more luxurious. It seemed that the farther up he went, the more precious the items that were on sale.

With that thought, Han Li quickly passed through floors two and three, even directly passing through the fourth floor.

He had originally thought to head straight toward the sixth floor, but a young, red-clothed servant blocked his way.

“According to the store rules, you must first gain the approval of the fifth floor shopkeeper before being allowed to proceed to the sixth floor.” The elegant, young servant expressionlessly said. Although he was only a Qi Condensation cultivator, he didn’t fear Han Li, a Foundation Establishment cultivator, in the slightest.

Han Li wrinkled his brow and headed toward the fifth floor’s main hall instead of becoming angry.

Although the main hall wasn’t large, there were several young, pretty female servants waiting there. When Han Li walked in, a man and woman were having a relaxed discussion.

The man had a common appearance and seemed to be about thirty-five years old. The woman appeared to be nearing forty years old and had the grace of a noble woman. It could be seen that in her youth she was a rarely seen beauty.

While the two were both Foundation Establishment cultivators, Han Li was surprised to see that the middle-aged woman was a late Foundation Establishment cultivator.

“Fellow Daoist, do you require any assistance?” When the middle-aged woman saw Han Li enter, she turned her head and gave him an enchanting smile. She spoke with a melodious voice that soothed those who heard it.

“I wish to purchase a few truly precious items. Do you have any such items? I don’t care whether it is a magic tool, talisman, or anything else.”

Hearing that Han Li’s tone was rather arrogant, the man glanced at Han Li with slight surprise.

“Hehe! If Fellow Daoist truly wishes to buy quality goods, then he has come to the right place. So long as you have the money to pay, we will definitely leave you satisfied.” Although the middle-aged woman was no longer young, her laughter was just as charming as that of a young woman.

“But as it happens, this Fellow Daoist also wishes to buy quality goods. Please wait for a bit, and I’ll take out a few items for you to browse.” The woman said with a beaming smile.

She then turned her head and gave a command with a serious expression, “Violet Lotus, come and serve these two esteemed guests some tea!”

“Of course, Madam!” The maid standing behind the woman respectfully replied.

As the middle-aged woman leisurely walked out, the maid poured a cup of tea for Han Li and the man who was originally here.

Chapter 354: Madam Lan

Han Li and that man were seated on different sides of the square table. They took several glances at each other, but neither of them had any intention of talking.

Cultivators who came here to do their shopping had no intentions of treading too closely to strangers as it would only breed hostility.

Despite this, the man still shot several curious glances at Crooked Soul who had remained outside the hall by the staircase.

Thanks to his perceptiveness, he had already made out Crooked Soul to be a refined corpse, but the Spiritual Qi fluctuations he felt from Crooked Soul's body left him quite baffled.

After all, cultivator-refined, iron-skinned corpses normally only had immense strength. It shouldn't be possible for them to possess magic power.

The man strongly suppressed his desire to ask questions. Although Han Li was a mid Foundation Establishment cultivator like himself, he was rather wary of him.

After Han Li had sipped away most of the tea, the woman finally returned to the main hall.

This time, she had two strong, robust men following behind her.

These two men didn't possess any magic power and had rather stiff faces. They were unexpectedly two realistic-looking puppets.

The puppets held a huge tray, wrapped in a bundle of silk cloth. It seemed that the shopkeeper intended on concealing the precious items within it.

A strange expression flashed from Han Li's eyes. He had just used his spiritual sense to see through the red silk and find out what was underneath it. However, he hadn't expected that the unremarkable silk cloth would block him. In his surprise, he couldn't help but turn his head to look at the man beside him.

He also appeared astonished. It was obvious he had done the same.

The middle-aged woman approached Han Li and the man until she was a few steps away. She wordlessly smiled before she spoke, "I've already acquainted myself with you, Fellow Daoist Fan. Might I ask for your name, Fellow Daoist? My surname is Lan. You two Fellow Daoists may call me Madam Lan." The woman gave herself a well-practiced introduction.

Naturally, Han Li couldn't awkwardly remain silent so he reluctantly said, "My surname is Han."

Afterwards, he said nothing further and displayed a cold demeanor, unwilling to speak further.

Madam Lan didn't take this to heart. After all, a vast majority of cultivators that came here feigned indifference like Han Li. It was something she had long become accustomed to.

As a result, she smiled slightly and beckoned to the puppets behind her. The well-chiseled puppets immediately walked forward. Afterwards, Madam Lan extended her flawless finger and lifted the red cloth cover, revealing the several items underneath.

Han Li and the man surnamed Fan simultaneously gazed at the items on the tray, their eyes gleaming with rapt attention.

A long sword, short blade, throwing dart, a ring, and a piece of jet-black armor were arranged in a line. From one glance at the sparkling shine each of these items radiated, one could tell that these were not common goods.

Once the magic tools on the dish were clearly seen, Han Li and the man surnamed Fan had differing reactions.

The cultivator named Fan intensely stared at the plate with a gaze containing a slight trace of exhilaration. But when Han Li glanced at them, he immediately turned his gaze away, revealing a lack of interest. This greatly surprised Madam Lan, causing her to pay closer attention to Han Li.

“This item is called the Cold Crystal Blade. It was refined using rare profound crystal and ice jade. Not only are its attacks powerful, it also possesses dark-cold Qi, capable of unknowingly decreasing the power of enemies in a chaotic battle. It truly is a

quality item among top-grade magic tools.” The woman gave calmly introduced the item after deftly grabbing the transparent, sparkling short blade from the tray and lifting it into the air.

She then waved the magic tool in her hand, immediately releasing a breeze of icy Qi. As soon as it appeared in the room, the Qi Condensation maids couldn’t help but shiver.

“Could Madam let this one take a look at that blade?” The man surnamed Fan looked at the magic tool with excitement.

Madam Lan faintly smiled in response and handed over the blade without the slightest of hesitation. Afterwards, she took a hidden glance at Han Li.

She only saw Han Li with an indifferent expression. He had merely lowered his head to look at the empty tea cup in his hand. As he did not show the slightest interest in this magic tool, Madam Lan felt slightly disappointed.

As he was playing around with the short blade in his hand, the man surnamed Fan spoke in a loud voice, “Alright, I want to buy this Cold Crystal Blade. How many spirit stones will it cost?”

Although Madam Lan was somewhat surprised to hear this, she calmly asked, “Doesn’t Fellow Daoist Fan intend to look at the other magic tools?”

“There is no need. This one naturally knows that the other items

are certain to be better. However, this one is embarrassingly short of money. I reckon that this blade is the only one I can buy. So even if the other items are better, this one does not have the heart to see them. This way, I can avoid feeling envy.” This Cultivator Fan spoke rather honestly with a touch of humor. The beautiful Madam Lan raised her hand to conceal a faint smile.

The woman quickly suppressed her smile and spoke methodically as usual, “This Cold Crystal Blade costs eight hundred spirit stones. Once Fellow Daoist Fan hands over that amount, he may take the item and leave.”

“Good. Could you take a look and check if this is the right amount of spirit stones?” Cultivator Fan bluntly took out a storage pouch. In the blink of an eye, a pile of varied-colored spirit stones poured out onto the table.

Madam Lan effortlessly swept her gaze across the table. With the corners of her lips slightly raised, she said, “How could I distrust you? There is no need to check.”

With that said, the woman took her storage pouch and absorbed the spirit stones on the table.

Madam Lan’s actions gave Cultivator Fan a very favorable impression. He then revealed an amicable expression before taking his leave.

But when Han Li saw this, he inwardly laughed in ridicule despite his indifferent expression.

‘What do you mean by “there is no need to check”! What was the spiritual sense enveloping the spirit stones supposed to be? Obviously, Madam Lan’s spiritual sense is far stronger than common cultivators and was able to instantly count the number of spirit stones without anybody knowing. As such, she was able to deliberately say such a clever and convenient line.’ Han Li thought with an inward sneer.

Madam Lan hadn’t realized that her cheap trick had been seen through by Han Li. After she finished watching Cultivator Fan leave with a faint smile on her face, she turned her gaze upon Han Li once more.

“Fellow Daoist Han seems to hold no interest in these items! Could it be that these magic tools aren’t worthy of Fellow Daoist’s notice?” Madam Lan asked with a slight smile.

It was quite strange. She clearly knew that the person before her had inferior cultivation to her own. But for some unknown reason, she felt a trace of strange danger from Han Li, causing her speech to unconsciously become more tactful towards him as she didn’t dare to offend him.

“While the quality of these magic tools are quite decent, I am looking for magic tools that are a bit more exceptional. They must also be well suited to my techniques! Furthermore, not only am I looking for magic tools and talismans, I am also interested in rare items.” Han Li replied serenely.

“Oh! If Fellow Daoist Han had such requests, he should’ve said them sooner. This one had believed that Fellow Daoist Han would’ve been satisfied with any kind of magic tool, the same as Fellow Daoist Fan.” Madam Lan couldn’t help but giggle. She then continued speaking with great confidence, “So long as Fellow Daoist is able to pay the price, our Stardust Pavilion will provide all the items you desire.”

Han Li dryly laughed and directly answered with a question, “Since Madam insists, I will bluntly mention them. Does your esteemed pavilion have any pill formulas useful to Foundation Establishment cultivators for sale? Or any sets of magic tools? Naturally, the greater the number in a magic tool set, the better.”

The woman’s face revealed slight emotion before immediately regaining her calm.

Madam Lan stared at Han Li with her beautiful eyes before speaking deliberately, “Fellow Daoist’s requests are truly unusual. Were it half a month ago, I may have been left helpless. But now, my pavilion had acquired two such pill formulas and a set of high-quality magic tools. The prices of these items are truly great. They are not something that I am able to sell. Fellow Daoist will have to continue this conversation on the sixth floor!”

Han Li had anticipated what the woman would say and asked indifferently, “Then am I allowed to go up to the sixth floor?”

Madam Lan lightly brushed her hair before gently smiling. “Of course you can. But in accordance to sect rules, I must first inspect Fellow Daoist’s qualifications.”

“What qualifications?” Han Li casually asked.

“It’s very simple! It is whether or not Fellow Daoist possesses a thousand spirit stones or items of equivalent value.” The woman stated with an earnest tone.

“Is this enough?” Without any objections, Han Li took out the storage pouch that kept his spirit stones and tossed it toward the woman.

Han Li’s collection of spirit stones had reached a thousand long ago. Now, he should be in possession of nearly two thousand spirit stones.

Madam Lan took the storage pouch and examined it with her spiritual sense. She then nodded her head and said, “Please follow me. I will personally accompany you to the sixth floor.”

When Han Li saw her walking towards the stairs, he silently followed after her.

The young, red-clothed servant guarding the stairwell silently stepped to the side upon seeing Madam Lan approach. Han Li and Madam Lan then climbed to the sixth floor one after the other.

Chapter 355: Redthread Shadowchaser

Needles

To tell the truth, Han Li was quite curious about the sixth floor's shopkeeper. The fifth floor shopkeeper was a late Foundation Establishment cultivator. Could the sixth floor cultivator be a Core Formation expert?

Han Li felt slightly excited.

Then Han Li glanced at the young, seventeen-year-old woman that stood behind Madam Lan and was left dumbfounded.

The young woman was dressed rather simply, and her beauty was merely above average. However, for this young mortal woman who was lacking even the slightest magic power to be the sixth floor shopkeeper was truly beyond Han Li's expectations.

But what was particularly unusual was what happened when the young woman saw Madam Lan climb to the sixth floor. She continuously called out, "Aunty Lan! Aunty Lan!" with much intimacy. At the same time, she completely overlooked Han Li, causing him to feel sullen.

"That's enough, Xiu'er! There is a guest here!" Although Madam Lan's words were harsh, her tone was filled with obvious affection.

"Guest?" The young woman indifferently glanced at Han Li without the slightest of care.

“Yes. This Fellow Daoist Han wishes to buy pill formulas and the set of magic tools we previously acquired. Thus, I am bringing him to the sixth floor and having you receive him. I have to go back down. There may be more guests arriving at the fifth floor!” Madam Lan spoke with great warmth.

“So it’s like that. But the next time Aunty Lan is free, she must definitely come up and keep me company.” The young woman spoke with reluctance.

Madam Lan gave a kind smile in response before heading back down. The young woman gazed at her as she descended.

She eventually turned her head to glance at Han Li and spoke coldly, “What sort of pill formulas does your esteemed self want? We possess eight pill formulas, but only two are useful to Foundation Establishment cultivators. In addition, the prices for them are astonishingly high. It won’t just cost several hundred spirit stones.”

When Han Li heard the tone of her voice, he smiled instead of becoming angry.

“So long as the pill formulas are genuine, price is of no concern.” Han Li’s tone was exceptionally grand. The young woman was surprised by his response and earnestly sized him up.

“Then please wait a moment. I will call for people to bring out the pill formulas and the set of magic tools.” The young woman’s

expression softened. It was only natural that she acted more pleasantly around a magnanimous guest.

She merely took out a small bell and lightly tapped it with a rhythm. Then, she casually sat in her chair without the slightest intention of entertaining Han Li.

Han Li felt somewhat amazed at this. Still, he calmly pulled out a chair and sat across from the young woman. The only thing separating the two was a wooden table.

Han Li's action caused the young woman's graceful brow to lightly crease. Although her expression wasn't very happy, she ultimately didn't say anything.

A short moment later, a young female cultivator walked in, grasping two jade boxes: one large and one small.

"Place them there." The young woman spoke indifferently as she pointed to the side of the table.

"Yes, Young Madam!" The female cultivator respectfully replied before placing the jade boxes down on the table. She then took the initiative to withdraw.

Han Li's eyes flashed with surprise upon seeing the female cultivator speak so respectfully to a young female mortal.

"The pill formulas and the magic tools are here. Your esteemed

self should have a look. If they are to your satisfaction, then I will tell you the price.” The young woman lightly pushed the jade boxes toward Han Li.

Since she insisted, Han Li didn’t act with the slightest politeness. He took the small jade box and opened the lid, revealing a red and white jade talisman.

Han Li touched the two jade talismans and closed his eyes, slowly submerging his spiritual sense within them.

When the young woman saw that Han Li was inspecting the pill formulas, she took out a thin, white book and started to read through it without the slightest of concern.

After the time it took to finish a cup of tea, Han Li withdrew his spiritual sense and wore an expression of contemplation.

One of the formulas was similar to the Qi Gathering Pill that Lei Wanhe had previously given him. It was useless to him. As for the other, it wasn’t an ancient pill formula. It was for a pill called the “True Essence Pill”. Apart from the required age of the ingredients used, it was rather easy to refine. It was very suitable for his use.

However, the cost of this pill formula was unexpectedly several times greater than the “Qi Gathering Pill” formula. Even Han Li understood the difference in value between ancient formulas and ordinary formulas that were currently used in the cultivation world.

With that thought, Han Li returned the jade slips to their boxes with an indifferent expression. Then he took the larger box and opened it.

The magic tools in the box caused Han Li to become stunned from a single glance. The jade box actually contained a set of thirteen fine needles sparkling with red light. Each of the needles were only about an inch long, but their fire-red bodies emitted a fluctuating glow.

“Flying needle magic tools?” Han Li couldn’t help but mutter in astonishment.

Even with Han Li’s vast experience with magic tools, this was the first time he had seen flying needle magic tools such as these. He suddenly grew very excited. He previously hadn’t seen anyone make full use of them either.

When the young woman heard Han Li’s murmurs, she couldn’t help but turn her head to look at him with a trace of displeasure. She then continued to read the book without paying him any further attention.

At that moment, Han Li was carefully examining one of the red needles as he held it in a pinch without paying any attention to the young woman’s displeasure. Naturally, he was aware of her displeasure, but he wasn’t about to accommodate her aloof, arrogant attitude.

He was now staring at the needle with squinted eyes and a serious

expression.

Although Han Li hadn't seen any needle-type magic tools previously, he had heard many rumors with regards to the stealthy viciousness of flying needles.

He had heard that while their offensive power were slightly inferior to ordinary magic tools, their bodies were small, and their flight was quick, thereby being the most suitable weapon to launch an ambush with. As such, many cultivators praised the flying needles to be a 'hidden weapon', causing flying needles to possess quite the reputation in the cultivation world.

Naturally, there were many reasons as to why flying needle magic tools were so thin. Not only were they refined using peculiar materials, they were also several times more difficult to refine. Because of this, they were rarely seen in the cultivation world. In addition, users of flying needles would often only use them as a last resort since they were unwilling to allow others to know of their existence.

This was why Han Li received such a shock when he saw a set of thirteen such magic tools unexpectedly appear before him.

"Young Miss, does this set of flying needles have a name?" Han Li felt very pleasantly surprised, but his expression remained calm when he asked the young woman.

When the young woman heard Han Li, she put down the book and indifferently said, "The Redthread Shadowchaser Needles!"

“Good. I wish to acquire the True Essence Pill along with the set of flying needles!” Han Li spoke without the slightest hesitation.

The young woman revealed a strange expression as she asked with disbelief, “Yi! You truly want that set of magic tools?”

“What is it? Does this set of magic tools have some sort of defect or is your esteemed pavilion unwilling to sell it?” Han Li raised his eyebrows in dissatisfaction.

“Your esteemed self is mistaken. Although the Redthread Shadowchaser Needles are extremely precious, our Stardust Pavilion does not wish to keep it. I merely ask this because there is something I must first tell you. This set of flying needles is substantially different from ordinary sets of magic tools. There is no origin controller, nor any child-mother pieces. If you wish to activate them, you must simultaneously control all thirteen needles. Otherwise, they would be useless.” The young woman’s eyes and tone were both ice-cold.

“I must simultaneously control them?” Han Li came to a suddenly realization. It was no wonder that these rare flying needles had yet to be purchased. It held such a high requirement for one’s spiritual sense.

The young woman continued without the slightest of humor, “That’s right. Originally, Aunt Lan and a few others fancied this set of magic tools, but because they were only able to control up to nine needles, they have given up on it.”

“So, all thirteen needles then?” Han Li chuckled before suddenly raising his hand, beckoning to the rest of the needles in the box. With a flash of red light, all of the flying needles simultaneously floated. The red needles quickly revolved around Han Li, transforming into thirteen red threads that were difficult for the naked eye to see, creating a finely woven red net in an instant.

The young woman’s small mouth gaped, revealing an appearance of surprise to Han Li for the first time.

Han Li soon waved his hand once more, returning the red threads to the jade box which once again revealed their original appearance as needles.

With an unchanged expression, Han Li asked with a deep voice, “Am I able to purchase these magic tools now?”

“Since your esteemed self is able to use them, of course you can! Together with the True Essence Pill Formula, it will come to a total of four thousand spirit stones.” The young woman regained her calm and once again spoke without the slightest humor.

“Four thousand spirit stones!” Han Li looked at the young woman while rubbing his nose. That price had exceeded his expectations.

“The pill formula is one thousand five hundred spirit stones! The flying needles are two thousand five hundred!” The young woman listed the price without the slightest hesitation.

To tell the truth, the woman didn't see the four thousand spirit stones as overly expensive. After all, these items were rarely seen within the cultivation world. Were it not for the defeat of the three allied countries against the Devil Dao, they would've never sold such valuable items!

At that moment, Han Li suddenly took a seat and assumed a solemn expression, "At what price does your esteemed pavilion purchase thousand-year-old spiritual medicine?"

Chapter 356: Disaster And Fortune Come Hand In Hand

Han Li calmly walked out from the Stardust Pavilion a quarter hour later.

He turned his head to look at the huge pavilion with a faint, mysterious smile on his face before continuing on with long strides.

Han Li currently had the “Redthread Shadowchaser Needles” and a jade slip containing the True Essence Pill formula inside his storage pouch.

Moments ago, he had casually asked about the selling price of thousand-year-old spiritual medicine. Instead of taking out any herbs, he took out two boxes each containing a “Face Setting Pill” created from thousand-year-old herbs and handed it over to the young woman.

Han Li vividly remembered the fervent expression of the usually aloof woman when he told her about the Face Setting Pill’s miraculous effect of an unchanging appearance. The sharp contrast with her usual expression had surprised him by no small measure.

Soon after, the young woman called over a pill refinement expert from the Stardust Pavilion to personally confirm the claims. However, none of them had refined such a pill before.

In the end, she brought the two medicine pills to the fifth floor's Madam Lan to verify the legitimacy of the "Face Setting Pills" as well as their miraculous effect of preserving one's appearance.

After a whispered discussion, the women decided that Han Li could pay for the pill formula and the magic tool set with the two Face Setting Pills along with a thousand spirit stones.

Now that he thought about it, he felt it was quite funny.

Being able to eternally preserve one's appearance was a matter that proved extremely enticing and irresistible to women. Even such a clever schemer with such deep cultivation as Madam Lan revealed the same fervent expression as the young woman upon hearing Han Li say the words "Face Setting Pill". As a result, Han Li came to a complete understanding about how greatly women cared about their appearance.

However, the amount that Han Li had acquired for the Face Setting Pills had far exceeded his estimations.

He had originally believed that the pills would get him two thousand spirit stones at most. Therefore, their offer had left Han Li completely satisfied. Naturally, he didn't attempt to haggle over the price and ignore their generous offer. It was quite fortunate that the two shopkeepers were women. Were it a male shopkeeper, he would have been quite lucky to get a few hundred spirit stones for them.

After he finished the trade, Madam Lan couldn't help but ask about the medicine pill's origin after recovering from her earlier fervor. Han Li thoughtlessly replied, "It was an unintentional discovery," before making himself scarce.

As Han Li walked out of the Stardust Pavilion, he felt some reluctance.

He knew that since the Stardust Pavilion was able to take out such rarities as pill formulas and the "Redthread Shadowchaser Needles," they were certain to have even more precious items. It was a pity that he wasn't able to take out more medicine pills and spiritual herbs for trade as Han Li clearly understood the dangers of openly revealing one's wealth.

With regret lingering in his heart, Han Li found an inn that accommodated cultivators and decided to stay there.

For the remainder of the day, Han Li started to meditate and refine Qi, preparing for the next day when he would have Store Owner Xu refine his magic tools.

On the morning of the second day, Han Li arrived at the Tool Refinement store in accordance with the appointed time.

Store Owner Xu had been waiting for him for quite a while. Once he saw Han Li, he immediately called out to him in excitement, urging him to enter the rear courtyard. Han Li gave a slight smile and entered.

.....

Half a month later, Han Li finally emerged from the store.

But this time, he appeared to be the opposite of how he entered and wore a darkened expression as if he were in an exceptionally foul mood.

Store Owner Xu closely followed behind him with a face full of shame. He was muttering something to Han Li as he followed him.

Han Li then released a long and heavy sigh, which somewhat alleviated his foul mood. Soon after, he spoke to Store Owner Xu in an amiable tone before slowly walking out of the market city, leaving behind the old man in a daze.

A short while later, Han Li had left the territory of the market city and flew toward Xin Ruyin's small, nameless mountain.

While Han Li stood on the Divine Wind Boat, his expression became sullen once more as he thought of the repeated tool refinement failures in the past half month.

He had overestimated the tool refinement technique of that Shop Owner Xu, resulting in the almost complete destruction of those precious materials just to make one magic tool set. As for the mantis materials that he had valued the greatest, they had been entirely lost in the refining process.

Han Li became extremely regretful after the fact and felt an urge to ruthlessly strike down Shop Owner Xu.

But in the end, when he saw the old man's great display of shame, he decided to let the matter drop. Even when he departed, he had consoled the old man in an amiable manner.

Sighing from what had happened, Han Li patted his storage pouch. Five white, flawless flying knives flew out from the storage pouch and continuously spiralled around Han Li.

After seeing the five knives magic tool set that was refined from the white spider's legs, Han Li's mood improved slightly.

Not only were three of the legs destroyed, but the white spider's shell that he intended to refine into armor had also been lost. But what he truly hadn't expected was that the entirety of the huge mantis materials would be completely wasted. This could be considered a great misfortune borne from great fortune. Han Li could only think about this with a bitter smile.

But this experience taught Han Li that the rarer and more superior the materials, the greater the skill that was required to refine them into magic tools. Even the same person who had refined the Inky Flood Dragon's materials with great success was not enough!

During his flight, Han Li appeared to have entered deep contemplation.

Several days later, he had once again arrived above a small, nameless mountain.

This time, Han Li didn't need to use a voice transmission talisman. The formation spell had automatically opened a passage for Han Li.

Han Li smiled. It seemed that Xin Ruyin had been waiting for his return. After all, the agreed date had nearly arrived.

After a short moment, Han Li was sitting down in a chair in a bamboo room. Wearing plain clothes, Xin Ruyin sat across from him with a smile.

Xin Ruyin took out a jade slip and handed it to Han Li. With a gentle expression, she said, "Senior Han, your arrival is quite timely. Yesterday, I just finished restoring the ancient transportation formation. So long as Senior restores the formation in accordance with the design, the ancient transportation formation will be functional."

From her point of view, restoring the ancient transportation formation proved to be quite challenging, and she was quite happy with her recent success.

Han Li reached out for the jade talisman. He was extremely happy and had even revealed a rarely seen undisguised smile.

Although he didn't intend to immediately make use of the

transportation formation, it was bound to be a good backup plan.

Han Li submerged his spiritual sense into the jade slip to take a look. As he expected, he saw detailed and complete instructions on the ancient formation's restoration.

“Thank you for your trouble, Young Lady Xin!” Han Li didn't drag his thanks into a long-winded speech. Instead, he sincerely said a few words of thanks and carefully put the jade slip away.

“It was nothing. I personally held much interest in this ancient transportation formation.” Xin Ruyin replied with a faint smile.

Soon after, she thought of something and took out a small, exquisite storage pouch and handed it over to Han Li. She unhurriedly spoke, “I only have another year or two to live at most. These are sets of formation flags and plates that Elder Brother Qi and I refined together. Since I won't be able to use them, I'll give them to Senior Han as a present! I hope it proves useful in assisting Senior Han with his future cultivation!”

Seeing that Xin Ruyin had given such an impressive gift with such light words, Han Li was left stunned.

At that point, he took a deep look at her. After a short moment of silence, he took the storage pouch into his hands and solemnly said, “Although I, Han Li, am not an honorable, kindhearted, or chivalrous hero, I will promise Xin Ruyin once more that as long as I have the strength, I will thoroughly extinguish the Fu Clan from the cultivation world without doubt!”

Xin Ruyin smiled in response. The purpose of her large gift had been achieved.

The more reluctant someone was to make a pledge, the more sincerely they would attempt to uphold it.

“If Senior doesn’t have any pressing matters, he can stay at my humble abode for a few days. I do hope to have a chat with Senior Han about the Dao of Formation Spells.”

.....

Three days later, Han Li left the nameless mountain on his Divine Wind Boat and arrived at White Pond Mountain, a nearby gathering place for cultivators.

Rogue cultivators and cultivator clan members would often gather here to exchange information of the cultivation world and conduct trade as well.

Han Li came in order to hear how much the situation had deteriorated in the State of Yue and whether or not the Seven Sects were able to make a turnaround.

Only after acquiring this information would Han Li be able to decide on his next plan of action.

The day of the next cultivator gathering had nearly arrived.

White Pond Mountain wasn't far from Xin Ruyin's nameless mountain, and she and Qi Yunxiao had previously went there several times. Naturally, a small meeting such as this would mostly have Qi Condensation cultivators. Only rarely would Foundation Establishment cultivators appear here.

One day later, Han Li arrived at the base of the so-called White Pond Mountain.

This mountain was quite large and had three peaks. The tallest and most rugged location, the west peak, was where the meeting would be hosted.

Han Li turned into a streak of white light as he shot toward the mountain peak.

Chapter 357: White Pond Mountain

The west peak of White Pond Mountain was slightly larger than Han Li had imagined.

Not only was there an ancient Buddhist temple on the mountain peak, there were also more than ten stone kiosks of varying sizes, each with a group of several cultivators chatting around them.

Naturally, there were a few straggling cultivators that wandered about the kiosks and the temple.

It seemed that they were those who had impatiently arrived early for the White Pond Mountain's meeting.

Han Li observed the mountain peak from the air for a moment before spiralling down and landing in an obscure corner.

Soon after, Han Li walked to the nearby stone kiosks with Crooked Soul in tow.

Because of Han Li's powerful spiritual sense, he was soon able to clearly hear the whispered discussions of the cultivators within the kiosks.

One of the whispered conversations in particular captured Han Li's attention.

Han Li focused on this four-person conversation and discovered that they were talking about the war situation between the Seven Sects of Yue and the Devil Dao. His interest was roused, and he walked over without further hesitation.

“This was a great victory for the Devil Dao. Not only were the Six Sects of the State of Yue forced to flee from their homeland, catastrophe will also befall the State of Zijin and our very own State of Yuanwu!” A pale middle-aged man sighed deeply after speaking.

“That’s right. In the last great battle, the Six Sect’s power had suffered great losses. The two countries that had fought alongside them also lost sixty percent of their forces as well! The Heavenly Star Sect and the other sects are now facing great pressure!” A youth about twenty years old spoke with *schadenfreude*.

Among the other three in the discussion, two old men had unchanged expressions and didn’t reply. As for the middle-aged man who had just spoken, he couldn’t help but bitterly laugh, wanting to say something in response.

But at that moment, he was interrupted by someone’s voice from the side.

“While it is true that the Heavenly Star Sect finds itself in a dilemma along with the other great sects, the lives of us rogue cultivators and those from cultivator clans will also soon take a turn for the worse. Those of the Devil Dao espouse the belief that the strong should feed on the weak. When that time comes, we definitely won’t be able to enjoy free and easy-going lives.” Han Li

slowly walked in and spoke the words that the middle-aged man intended to say.

When the four realised that an outsider was nearby, they were startled and immediately grew silent.

But when they were unable to perceive Han Li's cultivation, they all revealed a trace of worry and respectfully saluted Han Li. The middle-aged man then hurriedly rushed to exonerate the youth, "Senior, my honorable nephew spoke without thinking. He doesn't hold the slightest disrespect toward the sects. I hope Senior won't take offense!"

These people had unexpectedly presumed Han Li to be a high-grade cultivator from the State of Yuanwu's cultivation clans. The youth who had just spoken appeared especially nervous.

"Hehe, Fellow Daoists are mistaken. I am but a rogue cultivator. I was only casually adding onto the conversation." Han Li smiled and warmly explained.

The four relaxed upon hearing Han Li's words. Although they didn't know whether Han Li was truly a rogue cultivator, they clearly understood he wouldn't be pursuing the rash words that had been previously spoken.

Thus, they gave Han Li a respectful welcome. Han Li then took a seat next to the stone table within the kiosk.

“Us Juniors are truly honored to have Senior here. However, why would Senior partake in such a lowly exchange of this degree?” An old man with a red-flushed face cautiously asked.

It was obvious why this man was amazed. A small meeting place like White Pond Mountain would normally find it difficult to attract Foundation Establishment cultivators. If such high-grade cultivators wanted to converse, they would normally seek out a higher class gathering spot.

“First was due to time as I came here from a desolate mountain where I was cultivating. Recently, I’ve heard news that the cultivators from my country, the State of Yue, had suffered a huge loss. I felt that the cultivation world was about to undergo great changes, so I thought I’d discreetly look for information. Do you Fellow Daoists have the latest information on the Devil Dao and the State of Yue?” Han Li gave a simplified explanation.

The four looked at each other for a moment before three of them focused their attention on the shriveled old man among them.

“The most well informed is naturally our Eldest Brother Ding. After all, the Ding Clan possesses many secular properties in the State of Yue!” The red-faced old man quickly said.

The other two simultaneously agreed, causing Han Li’s eyes to flash with a queer expression.

Old Man Ding expressed some embarrassment in response. He helplessly said, “Our Ding Clan members in the State of Yue have

indeed given us information on recent circumstances. Of course, the clan doesn't wish for this information to spread but since you are all my close friends and this Senior also wishes to know, I can talk about it. However, I hope you all won't easily make this information known."

The other three couldn't help but grow excited and repeatedly praise him. Even Han Li gently nodded his head.

The old man lightly sighed and slowly spoke, "I've just received this information a few days ago. Currently, the State of Yue is in great turmoil. Although the Devil Dao had defeated the Six Sect's allied armies, a large amount of the Six Sect's cultivators have broken off from their retreat out of the State of Yue and have been incessantly launching guerilla raids utilizing their familiarity of the terrain. I've heard that there were also a few Core Formation cultivators who haven't retreated, thus keeping the Devil Dao busy. After all, Core Formation cultivators aren't so easily dealt with. In addition, as the Six Sects have existed in the State of Yue for so many years, they possessed a lot of hidden power and have been causing the Devil Dao's takeover of the State of Yue to be rather troublesome.

"As for the State of Yue's cultivation clans, they have divided into three factions. One faction turned traitor once the Six Sects were defeated; they took the initiative to surrender and pay allegiance to the Devil Dao. Another faction consisted of those that were too closely tied with the Six Sects. Fearing that the Devil Dao would want to take revenge, they fled the State of Yue as the Six Sects had. As for the last faction, they are waiting to see how things will develop before taking action.

“As for the Six Sect’s long-established key locations, those from the Masked Moon Sect and Giant Sword Sect have yet to be broken through by the Devil Dao. The other four sects have been completely broken through, but it was said that very little had been obtained from the attacks. A majority of the rare items had already been removed by the six sect’s disciples.

“The way I see it, every day the Devil Dao isn’t able to pacify the State of Yue is another day where the State of Yuanwu or Zijin isn’t attacked. After all, their numbers are great and they were able to simultaneously take down two small countries and a mid rank country in one fell swoop. Since it is only a matter of time before they will fall upon us, they have no problem dealing with the disruptive Six Sect cultivators for the time being.” The old man’s slowly spoken words had revealed his own take on the matter.

The red-faced old man couldn’t help but interrupt and ask, “Eldest Brother Ding, why do you think that the Devil Dao has given us time to breathe, allowing for our country’s sects to prepare for their attack?”

“This is hard to say. After all, I am only aware of the surface information. As for the absolute truth of the matter, I’m afraid that only the highest echelons of the sects know.” Old Man Ding slowly shook his head and stole a glance at Han Li.

It was obvious that he believed Han Li to be a cultivator from a sect of his own country and had refrained from speaking of certain matters.

Old Man Ding didn’t wish to continue speaking of that issue and

suddenly said something with a smile that left Han Li shocked instead.

“Because the Six Sects of the State of Yue wished for a hasty retreat, they used the strategy of cutting off their own tail. They only brought along their talented elite disciples while leaving behind the rest of their many disciples as ignorant sacrifices. It is said that the ones who most effectively applied this cruel tactic were the highest echelons of Yellow Maple Valley’s disciples. They had their trusted elite make a smooth escape from the State of Yue while sacrificing two whole groups of disciples—nearly all of their cultivators apart from those that escaped. Tsk tsk. Their methods are truly impressive!”

Although the old man said this indifferently, Han Li’s heart suddenly sunk, and his face became faintly twisted. But fortunately, the others didn’t dare to stare at Han Li for long, so none of them noticed this change.

Strongly suppressing his astonishment, Han Li calmly asked, “Fellow Daoist Ding, you said that Yellow Maple Valley sacrificed two batches of disciples. How did this happen? I am quite interested!”

“Hehe, since Senior is asking, Junior will naturally answer truthfully. I heard that when the upper echelon of the State of Yue received the news of their frontline’s defeat, Yellow Maple Valley immediately plotted to make a crafty escape. They would first have a group of disciples rush to evacuate but secretly divulge this information to the spies of the Devil Dao, claiming that the group contained their elite disciples. This group would also bring along a

large amount of spirit stones and materials, completely attracting the attention of the Devil Dao soldiers. At the same time, they left behind another group of ignorant disciples and had them use the great formation to confront the Devil Dao. With these two groups drawing the enemy's full attention, Yellow Maple Valley's highest echelon then had the true trusted elite disciples retreat in the opposite direction with the sect's thousand years' worth of savings.

“I heard that although the number of people to safely retreat from Yellow Maple Valley was the fewest, they had the smoothest retreat. As for the other five sects, although they retreated en masse, they encountered repeated attacks and had to fight for their lives on many occasions. Much of their valuables have fallen into the Devil Dao's hands as a result. This matter then became widely spread throughout the State of Yue by the Devil Dao.” Not daring to slight Han Li, the old man gave him a complete explanation.

Han Li's expression remained unchanged as he spoke unhurriedly with a soft voice, “Oh, so it was like that! Those abandoned Yellow Maple Valley disciples sure were foolish!”

Chapter 358: The Endless Sea, The Moulan

Han Li then suddenly spoke with a gentle smile, “Well then, knowing that the the State of Yue is currently in turmoil is enough for me!”

These incomprehensible words left the four with a feeling of profound mystery. They could only force themselves to give him a smile in return.

Han Li stood up and said amiably, “You can all go ahead and continue chatting! I am going to go to a different room.”

“As you please, Senior!”

“Best wishes, Senior!”

.....

The four hastily saw off Han Li with respect.

Han Li casually beckoned with his arm and called out to Crooked Soul who had stood outside throughout the conversation. They then walked together to another stone kiosk.

.....

Four hours later, Han Li stood at a corner of the mountain peak

and lowered his head in contemplation.

He had participated in many discussions about the current affairs of the State of Yue. As a result, he had come to the conclusion that the current situation in the State of Yue could only be described as 'chaotic'.

Under these circumstances, he only had two options.

One was to use a flying magic tool and fly to a country far away from the State of Yue, in order to find a place suitable for cultivation.

The other option was to restore the ancient transportation formation and take a gamble to see where the transportation formation would take him. After all, this precious ancient transportation formation was built underground for a reason. It was certain to be linked to a distant location.

At first glance, he felt that he should obviously choose the first option as it was more reliable. But after some consideration, Han Li felt that it was just as risky.

To the east and west of the State of Yue were the Devil Dao's State of Tianluo and the Righteous Dao Alliance's State of Fengdou. As a result, he would only be able to head north or south.

If he were to flee north of Yuanwu, there would be several tens of small and mid ranked countries, but Han Li knew that their

cultivators wouldn't be able to resist the attacks of either the Devil or Righteous Dao. Some of them had even attached themselves to the two great powers, becoming their puppets and occasionally engaging in both open and covert struggles with the other side. Otherwise, it would have been impossible for the State of Tianluo and Fengdou to conduct a wide-scale turf war, especially since they originally only had a small stretch of common border with one other.

Those countries would soon be turned into battlefields by the Devil Dao and Righteous Dao Alliance, and Han Li naturally wouldn't be able to stay there.

But if he were to brave the dangers of travelling through these countries and continue north, he would arrive at the Heavenly South Region's northmost area, the "Endless Seas", where few cultivators dared to travel.

Not only was this sea extremely dark, it was also limitless and had many rare species of fishes living within. The fishes were extremely violent and were no less vicious than their high-grade demon beast counterparts on land. Even Core Formation cultivators would find themselves in extreme danger if they fell into the sea.

The thought of flying across the sea was but a mere fantasy! There was once a Nascent Soul cultivator who was curious about the end of the sea. After preparing fully, he then flew over the ocean water. After flying for over a year, he was still unable to see any end of the sea and hadn't seen the slightest hint of land.

At that point, over half of his medicine pills and spirit stones had been exhausted, and he could only resentfully turn back. Otherwise, he would only be able to die at sea when he ran out of spiritual power, even if he was a Nascent Soul cultivator.

Naturally, Han Li wouldn't indulge himself in the fantasy of crossing the sea. His only thoughts were to head down south.

South of the State of Yue, after passing through the State of Zijin and then another six countries, one would arrive at the Nine Nations Union, an inseparably close alliance of nine countries of various sizes.

This alliance between the nine countries was formed mostly for the purpose of combating their fearsome invaders, the Moulan Race's "Spell Soldiers".

When speaking of the Moulan Race and their magic soldiers, one wouldn't be able to avoid mentioning the Moulan Prairies, home of the Moulan Tribes and a close neighbor of the Nine Nations Union.

The Moulan Race were completely different from the Yan people of the States of Yuanwu and Yue. Their people were completely nomadic, possessing a culture of fearlessness and a love for brandishing their sabers and spears. The Moulan Race were made up of countless tribes of various sizes, where small tribes would consist of several hundred thousand people and the large tribes would number several tens of millions.

Cultivators also existed within these tribes, but they were called

“Spell Soldiers” instead of cultivators. It is said that they are indistinguishable from common cultivators, and the divisions of cultivation as well as the cultivation techniques are extremely similar. The only thing that differed were that the spell soldiers of Core Formation rank and higher didn’t care much about external items such as magic tools and talismans. Instead, they were focused on mastering their elemental Daoist magics to perfection. They even had secret earthborn techniques where they merged with the prairie. Their research had produced a variety of extremely strange and formidable magic techniques, and in turn created a new school of magic techniques that distinguished the Moulan, which they called “Spirit Techniques”.

By relying on these incisive “Spirit Techniques”, the Moulan Race’s spell soldiers were able to contend and even gain the upper hand against cultivators of equivalent rank.

As the Moulan Race’s “Spell Soldiers” grew increasingly numerous, their need for spirit vein locations and spirit stones intensified to the point of significantly worsening the depletion of cultivation resources. This shortage was further exacerbated by the extreme lack of natural cultivation resources in the Moulan Prairie.

As a result, the Moulan Race’s spell soldiers had their gazes set upon the abundant Spiritual Qi and resources of the nine countries for as long as anybody could remember. They had often launched attacks against these countries in order to seize their spirit veins, spirit stone mines, and other such resources vital to cultivators.

Naturally, the cultivation world of the nine countries were

unwilling to allow their resources to be seized by these savage cultivators. In the end, a bloody war of magic had erupted.

In the beginning, the nine countries had individually resisted, but they had quickly suffered defeat at the hands of the united armies of the Moulan Tribes, surrendering a large portion of their resources and land.

Having now experienced the ferociousness of the Moulan, they learned from their defeat and hastily formed the “Nine Nations Union”. By using underhanded and deplorable methods, they were able to gradually defeat the Moulan Tribe’s spell soldiers and retake their land.

But having just tasted victory, the Moulan Tribes were naturally unwilling to simply give up. After endless years of strife and warfare, mutual hatred had bloomed within both sides. The death toll had grown to such a degree that even the mortals of Moulan and Yan had been influenced.

As of now, the people of Moulan didn’t dare to set foot within the borders of the Nine Countries. Likewise, those of Yan didn’t dare to travel too deeply into the Moulan Prairies.

As for how many people there are in the Moulan Tribes, nobody truly knows. The Moulan Prairie was far too large, and the Nine Nations Union had only tangled with a small portion of the Moulan Tribes.

Although the Moulan Prairie wasn’t endless like the Black Devil

Sea, it was said to require five years for someone to travel from one end of the prairie to the other end. Furthermore, “Moulan Prairies” was just a name given by the Moulan tribes. At the other end of the prairie lay the Moulan Tribe’s true enemy: the “Soaring Tribes”.

The Soaring Tribes were another nomadic tribe, who called these grasslands the “Heaventide Prairies”. This was due to their long-held beliefs in their patron God, the “Heaventide Beast”.

There was no reason for two nomadic tribes to live on the same prairie, and the two ethnicities had formed a relationship of fatal enmity. It was unknown for how long their soldiers and cultivators had been fighting one another.

In any case, a huge battle was certain to take place every hundred years or so at the center of the prairie. Ten million mortal soldiers would fight, while tens of thousands of cultivators battled throughout the sky. Naturally, the ultimate victor would be decided by the battle in the sky.

Han Li had learned all of this from rumors and ancient records of all kinds.

It was said that at the other end of the Moulan Prairie existed an incredibly huge Great Empire. The entire Heavenly South Region wasn’t even as large as a tenth of it.

Han Li found those rumors hard to believe and had difficulty imagining a country that was over ten times larger than the entire

Heavenly South Region.

Of course, all this had nothing to do with Han Li's current plans. They were just random thoughts that had rushed through his mind.

After he set aside his wandering thoughts, he eventually came to the conclusion that the Six Sect's evacuation wouldn't end within the nearby countries. They would definitely make a detour to the Nine Nations Union. After all, the cultivators of the nine countries had battles with the Moulan Spell Soldiers every other year and a war every ten years. They would definitely welcome the Six Sects and provide them with great assistance.

Naturally, the spirit veins and other such locations of value allocated to them would depend on their abilities.

If Han Li were to return to Yellow Maple Valley, he would just continue to be cannon fodder. This meant he definitely couldn't head south.

Although he had already come to a clear answer on what he should do, he received a great headache once he thought about it again. First, he would see whether or not he could restore the transportation formation. If he managed to successfully repair it, he would then reconsider whether or not he would use it.

'At best, I could return if I'm dissatisfied. At worst... Well, this option did hold a certain degree of danger after all!' Han Li thought with a bitter smile.

Chapter 359: A Surprising Encounter With An Acquaintance

Having come to a decision, Han Li silently flew off the mountain.

Later on, when the White Pond Mountain's meeting convened, those Qi Condensation cultivators that had spoken with Han Li would be left baffled by his absence.

Han Li first went to the Heavenly Star Sect's market city to purchase the list of items that he would need to restore the ancient transportation formation. Then, he hurried off to the State of Yue.

This time, Han Li didn't take the direct route to enter the State of Yue. Instead, he circled around to a remote part of the border between the State of Yuanwu and Yue and stealthily entered through there. Now that the State of Yue belonged to the Devil Dao, he took steps to avoid entering dangerous territories to prevent having enemies pursuing him the entire way.

But Han Li didn't know that because of this precaution, he had unexpectedly avoided a crisis.

Currently, the majority of the State of Yue's borders were heavily patrolled. If Han Li had recklessly returned using his original path, he would have been unable to escape their attention, most likely leading to an unavoidable pursuit and battle!

Having safely entered the State of Yue, Han Li hastily journeyed

on routes through the most desolate areas he could find, allowing him to arrive at the spirit stone mine near the transportation formation unnoticed.

Han Li stealthily observed the spirit stone mine from far away, as it had now fallen into the hands of the Devil Dao. He saw Devil Dao disciples wearing green and white clothing with either a dark green ghost skull or a pink peach blossom tucked within the corners of their sleeves. It seemed they were cultivators from the Ghost Spirit Sect and the Harmonious Bond Sect.

Now knowing that the spirit stone mine was being guarded, Han Li stealthily slipped away and entered a nearby secret underground entrance.

He was able to easily find the concealed cave he had previously collapsed. After using his magic tools to tear the stone away, Han Li was able to take another look at the damaged ancient transportation formation. He let out a sigh of relief upon seeing the ancient transportation formation safe and sound.

During the following day, Han Li first used his newly acquired illusion formation flags to thoroughly conceal the secret location. Afterwards, he laid down the formation flags and formation plates of the Five Elements Reversal Formation, laying out a thorough defense for the cave containing the ancient transportation formation.

This way, he would have enough time to easily escape, even if he was discovered by the Devil Dao cultivators.

Freed from worry, Han Li started the transportation formation's restoration.

The jade talisman clearly stated that restoring the ancient transportation formation required the utmost precision. Even the slightest slant of an unremarkable talisman line could result in an error in the transportation formation.

After spending an entire seven days, Han Li had only managed to complete less than half of the restoration. But that night, Han Li encountered a huge problem: he had already ran out of the supplies he had bought earlier.

Han Li was flabbergasted! He had originally bought a bit more than what was mentioned on the item list, but he hadn't accounted for the wasted materials from the mistakes he would make while repairing the formation.

He was neither a tool refinement nor a formation spell master. As he was lacking in skill, he had wasted over half of his materials from errors and didn't have enough left to finish.

Han Li sighed. It seemed he'd have to go on another trip.

However, he remembered that a small market town of some cultivator clan lay several days east of the spirit stone mine. Although it wasn't large, items such as source iron and crystal jade could be found there. Since the core of the transportation formation wasn't ruined, he would only require a few common

materials to repair it.

His only worry was that given the current chaos of the cultivation world, this clan's market city might no longer exist! If this were the case, he'd have to travel to a more dangerous area.

Under the cover of night, Han Li flew out of the cave and headed directly toward the market city.

He had already decided that if the market city no longer existed, it would be best to return to the State of Yuanwu. He couldn't afford to just ignore the fact that the ancient formation was only half repaired.

To be safe, Han Li planned to only travel during the night. During the day he would find areas to rest and recover, keeping the danger to a minimum.

In this way, Han Li continued to fly east under the cover of night. Whenever rays of sunlight began to appear off the horizon, he would search for a place to rest.

But while he was gazing down from above, his expression suddenly changed, and he quickly turned his head in another direction. Han Li faintly felt as if someone was quickly flying toward him and that they weren't alone.

Han Li reacted instantly by stomping on his Divine Wind Boat and flew downward. In the blink of an eye, he had disappeared

into the darkness of night.

Just as he concealed himself and restrained his Spiritual Qi, a blinding light silently flashed by him like a bolt of lightning.

Then a bloody cloud about ten meters wide relentlessly chased after it, releasing unending ghostly wails and howls as it flew past. A bit behind the cloud was a pink ray of light that released soft, clear cries which seemed to also be in relentless pursuit.

Han Li, who was hidden in the mountain forest below, didn't pay attention to the white light, focusing on the bloody cloud instead. He felt that the bloody cloud seemed extremely familiar! Wasn't that the demonic art which had protected the young master of the Ghost Spirit Sect?

Having remembered the Ghost Spirit Sect's Young Master's ferociousness and the hardships he had been put through, Han Li's expression became gloomy.

While Han Li was still in thought, those in the sky had hastily descended, and the white light in front suddenly stopped. The brilliant light then quickly faded away, revealing a white-clothed woman standing on a flying sword.

This woman had a slender body and was wearing a cloak. As soon as she appeared, she coldly spoke to her pursuers, "Juniors, it appears you are unwilling to let me go. Could it be that you have a death wish?" The woman's voice was cold and beautiful. When Han Li heard it, he nearly jumped in surprise.

Greatly shocked, Han Li thought to himself, 'Is... Is this Fairy Nangong's voice? Is it really her?'

Although he had barely spoken with this woman, after he had slept with her, she had become the most important woman in Han Li's life. The memory of her had always remained clear in his heart. Also, while the voice sounded very much like Nangong Wan, it's hoarseness left him slightly doubtful.

While Han Li was lost in astonishment, the bloody mist and that pink light had both stopped about forty meters away in response to her threats. The bloody and pink lights then faded away, revealing the people inside.

The bloody cloud revealed the Ghost Spirit Sect's Young Master Wang Chan as expected, and the pink light revealed a man and woman that left Han Li dumbstruck.

He had last seen both at Yan Ling Castle, one was a demonic man as beautiful as a woman. As for the woman, she had been missing for a long time and was assumed to have fallen into the grasp of the Devil Dao, Dong Xuan'er¹.

Dong Xuan'er wore a cold expression and appeared rather dignified. Her originally seductive appearance had completely disappeared at some point in the past. But what surprised Han Li more was that she had already cultivated to mid Foundation Establishment from early Foundation Establishment.

When Han Li saw Dong Xuan'er standing by the demonic man's side, he couldn't help but tightly crease his brow.

At the moment, the Ghost Spirit Sect's Young Master and the gorgeous man were coldly staring at the masked woman and revealed a trace of hesitation.

Although Fairy Nangong had already fought with a Ghost Spirit Sect Core Formation expert and should be lacking in power, she had killed countless Devil Dao Core Formation cultivators while fighting for the Masked Moon Sect before. It wouldn't be worth it if she were to go all out and end them all in mutual destruction.

With that in mind, the two couldn't help but look at each other, neither willing to act first.

That strange, gorgeous man gazed at the masked woman with a slight smile, "If this were the past, both Senior Brother Wang and I would naturally flee at the mere sight of Fairy Nangong. But now... even if I wanted to let you go in consideration of the previous relationship between the Masked Moon Sect and the Harmonious Bond Sect, my Senior Brother Wang from the Ghost Spirit Sect would still be unwilling to let the matter go!"

The gorgeous man spoke as if they were all on extremely familiar terms with one another and as if this were a matter they had already discussed, but he unapologetically pushed the Ghost Spirit Sect's Young Master in front of him to act as a shield.

When Wang Chan heard this, he grew furious.

But he wasn't someone who showed emotion. He only coldly glanced at her before speaking calmly, "I heard that the Harmonious Bond Sect has a secret technique, the Art of Darkmoon Yin Absorption. A male cultivator can use it to forcefully absorb a portion of a woman's Origin Yin through pair cultivation techniques. Although it doesn't absorb much, with Senior's Core Formation cultivation, it will be enough for this Young Master Tian to breakthrough his current bottleneck and reach late Foundation Establishment."

The gorgeous man's expression paled slightly. He hadn't expected that his reason for bitterly pursuing this woman without end had been seen through by Wang Chan. He couldn't help but feel angered from the humiliation.

At that moment, the masked woman shot them a resentful glare. She gritted her perfect teeth and spat out, "You're all as bad as each other. Die!" She raised her hand and an earth-shattering white mist of swordlight shot toward them.

When Wang Chen and the gorgeous man saw this, they both turned pale from fright. The next instant, they had turned into a bloody cloud and a ray of light, respectively, in an attempt to hastily evade the attack.

Chapter 360: Halfway To Calamity

Dong Xuan'er, who was standing by the side of the gorgeous man, was also enveloped by the man's rainbow barrier. In an instant, the three had hastily flown back.

A spiteful strike from a Core Formation cultivator was not something the three of them could endure!

The swordlight filled the sky and closely pursued them for about forty meters before suddenly vanishing without a trace. At the same time, the woman's slender body swayed as if she were about to fall.

The Ghost Spirit Sect's Young Master and the gorgeous man grew elated upon seeing this and turned their retreat into a charge.

As Han Li watched on from below, his face stiffened and he subconsciously patted his storage pouch. The thirteen "Redline Shadowchaser Needles" flew out, and he quickly drew them back with his hands.

Even if he were to put himself in danger, Han Li couldn't allow Nangong Wan to wilt before his eyes.

No matter how self-centered and cold-hearted he may be, regardless of whether or not he could contend with the Ghost Spirit Sect's Young Master and the others, the entirety of his heart and soul urged him to act!

Just as Han Li was about to act and release the flying needles to save the masked woman, the sky abruptly underwent a massive change.

The previously wavering woman that was standing on the sword suddenly regained her bearings, and her eyes glinted with cold light.

Wang Chan and the gorgeous man grew pale. They immediately knew that they had fallen for her ruse, but by the time they wanted to run away, it was already too late.

The woman raised her hands and countless streaks of swordlight soared through the air and completely enveloped the three in blinding white light.

When Han Li saw this, he felt relieved and loosened his grip on his flying needles.

The sky shone with gray light from the masked woman's swordlight. A bloody cloud and pink light tottered within it like a small boat in a surging storm. However, they still managed to painfully endure. In particular, within the pink light, the gorgeous man and Dong Xuan'er released a strange azure-red light from their hands, offsetting the swordlight's attack.

Han Li lightly wrinkled his brow and lowered his head in contemplation before silently disappearing.

Meanwhile, the masked woman felt great worry.

She was truly surprised to see that even though she had used a ruse to press the Devil Dao cultivators, her current attack was still unable to deal with the three.

Not long ago, she had fought a great battle against a Devil Dao Core Formation cultivator. Her opponent had nearly succeeded in ending the battle in mutual destruction, depleting her magic power. Although she managed to escape further entanglements afterwards, her heavy injuries had been a cause for great concern.

Even worse, her magic treasure which was inseparably bonded to her soul had suffered serious damage during the previous battle, leaving it unusable for the time being.

Furthermore, because she was being pursued, she was forced to use a secret technique that greatly damaged her vitality to escape, forcefully drawing out a portion of her body's potential to produce a sliver of spiritual power.

Although she had managed to throw off the majority of her pursuers, she hadn't expected that these three, who possessed exceptional Devilish Arts, would continue to pursue her relentlessly.

Thus, she could only attempt to eliminate them. Otherwise, even if she were a Core Formation cultivator, she would be at their mercy once the effects of her secret technique subsided.

The reason why she had stopped here was because her spiritual awareness had felt that there was a cultivator here. Although she didn't know who it was, it was an undeniable fact that this person lacked the devilish aura possessed by those who used the techniques of the Devil Dao.

Furthermore, this person was a mid Foundation Establishment cultivator. Were he not a cultivator from a large clan, then he should be a cultivator from the other five allied sects. With nowhere to go and in a hopeless situation, she flew here with the intention of dragging that cultivator into this mess and possibly turning the situation for the better.

But she absolutely didn't expect that this person's spiritual sense would be so strong. This person had concealed himself from far away without any intention of involving himself.

As such, the masked woman could only confront the enemy alone and grit her teeth with aching resentment.

But once again, a frightening development had unfolded before her. These three Devil Dao cultivators were extremely tenacious, and they possessed immensely powerful defensive magic tools. Even if she were to use the entirety of her remaining spiritual power, she wouldn't be able to kill them quickly.

With regard to her high-grade talismans and impressive magic tools, they had been thoroughly exhausted in the battles many days earlier.

Her heart sank as she felt her last remnants of magic power about to disappear.

The Devil Dao cultivators that were bitterly enduring the swordlight felt its enormous suffocating pressure gradually weaken until it had completely disappeared. The three were stunned and immediately turned their gazes towards the masked woman. She blankly stood on top of her flying sword with dim, emotionless eyes while her body pitifully trembled.

Wang Chan and the beautiful man looked at each other with feelings of pleasant surprise. But as they had just suffered from her clever ploy, they hesitated and didn't dare to act rashly.

But at this moment, a streak of white light flew out from below like a bolt of lightning. In the blink of an eye, the white light had appeared in front of the masked woman. The silhouette within the white light embraced her waist before suddenly descending back down from where it came.

This scene left Wang Chan and the gorgeous man bursting with anger.

How could the two let such a rich prize be snatched out of their mouths? They reacted by immediately chasing after the white light with the full capabilities of their movement techniques.

However, Dong Xuan'er stood at her original location with an expression of shock. This was because that silhouette had appeared

extremely familiar and caused her to unconsciously hesitate.

About forty meters below, the white light shot towards a dense forest. After it entered the forest, the light faded away to reveal an unremarkable male youth.

As he tightly embraced the masked woman in one arm, he raised his head and expressionlessly looked at Wang Chan and the gorgeous man chasing after them.

Although the masked woman lacked the strength to struggle from his embrace, her eyes were filled with humiliation and resentment as if she was scolding him. However, the youth paid this no mind.

“So it turned out to be you!”

“It’s you!”

Once they clearly saw the male youth’s appearance, Wang Chen and the gorgeous man simultaneously yelled out.

They had both recognized Han Li, whom they had each attempted to kill before. After glancing at each other in surprise, they charged toward Han Li while using their abilities to the fullest extent without any further hesitation.

Wang Chan’s blood cloud swelled and expanded to forty meters wide in an instant. At the same time, its bloody scent grew much

more intense and its pressure became astonishingly stronger.

The gorgeous man coldly laughed, and a jade flute suddenly appeared in his hand. With a wave, a clear whistle sounded out, transforming his rainbow streak of light into a pink peacock. As he shot toward Han Li, Wang Chan closely followed behind him, unwilling to be second.

Seeing that the two were so aggressively chasing him, Han Li finally revealed a trace of panic.

He suddenly stomped on his small boat, causing it to release a blinding white light. It lightly trembled as if it were strung on a bow.

With the Devil Dao cultivators' astonishing offensive, they had already arrived in front of Han Li and blocked off his path of escape. They now clearly saw that the masked woman had given up her struggle and that her eyes were filled with despair.

This caused the two to feel much more at ease. It seemed that the female Core Formation cultivator no longer had the power to resist!

In that moment, Han Li's panicked expression underwent a sudden change, and he revealed a faint, strange smile.

When the two outstanding Devil Dao cultivators saw Han Li's expression, their hearts thumped heavily.

The scene before them suddenly changed as Han Li and the masked woman turned into a cool breeze as if they no longer existed. Then, two huge stones appeared in front of the Devil Dao cultivators, causing them to dodge away in alarm. They couldn't help but look around in astonishment.

What they saw caused their complexions to pale. They were surrounded by some kind of forest with countless towering trees similar to stone obelisks. They had been trapped inside of an illusory formation.

Wang Chan and the gorgeous man were furious.

Although the might of this illusory formation wasn't great, they would have to spend a good amount of time to break through it, giving their prey more than enough time to escape. As a result, these two young masters of the Devil Dao developed a bone-deep hatred for Han Li.

“Senior Brother Wang, let's quickly break out of this formation. Don't forget that my Junior Martial Sister Dong is still outside! With her cultivation, she can stall them for a short while. She will give us all the time that we will need.” The gorgeous man suddenly thought of something and coldly smiled.

Wang Chan's face grew cheerful for a moment, but then he spoke with doubt, “Ah, that's right. It seems this young master has forgotten something! That girl was once a Yellow Maple Valley disciple. Will she really block them?”

The gorgeous man then revealed some hesitation and replied with uncertainty, “She will definitely act! After all, Dong Xuan’er has a high position in my Harmonious Bond Sect, far greater than the status of an ordinary disciple that she had within Yellow Maple Valley! Furthermore, I, this father, treat her quite well!”

Chapter 361: Mishap

As Han Li stomped on his Divine Wind Boat with one arm wrapped around the masked woman, Dong Xuan'er blocked his way while covered in pink light.

“Junior Martial Sister Dong, must you act?” Han Li lightly sighed and spoke grudgingly.

Her eyes coldly glinted as she glanced down at the unconscious masked woman in Han Li's embrace. Dong Xuan'er expressionlessly said, “Han Li, if you wish to leave, you must first pass through me! I have always been curious as to why my Master Hong Fu had insisted on marrying me to you!

“Also, did you really expect me to allow a Masked Moon Core Formation cultivator to easily escape?” Dong Xuan'er's refined brow gradually frowned, and she wore a baleful expression.

Once she finished, Han Li didn't reply with words regarding old affection or other such nonsense. After all, he had used formation flags to hastily trap the other two within a simple illusion formation. It wouldn't keep them trapped for long.

Han Li's expression sunk and he said, “Since it's like this, then don't blame me for being ruthless, Young Lady Dong!”

Han Li then loudly yelled and waved his hand, releasing two black lights and five streaks of white light. In addition, a tortoise shell appeared beside him and blocked his front. Afterwards, four

puppet beasts appeared at both his sides. With gaping mouths, they shot out light beams as thick as a bowl.

He took action with the entirety of his power. He didn't have any notion of going easy on the fairer sex.

Once Dong Xuan'er saw Han Li's ferocious offensive, her expression underwent great change.

She grit her teeth and waved her flawless hand, summoning a pink muslin cloth. Her hands then emitted a red-orange glow which combined with her muslin cloth to form a huge barrier of sparkling red light surrounding herself.

Dong Xuan'er was convinced that even if Han Li's attack was more overbearing, it still wouldn't be able to break through the powerful barrier created from her "Fire Phoenix Cloth" and devilish arts.

As Dong Xuan'er was basking in confidence, Han Li's Divine Wind Boat flashed with white light and streaked past her with a woosh.

Likewise, the magic tools that were in an overbearing attack made an immediate turn and quickly flew after Han Li.

Without fighting for even a moment, Han Li had instead used his attack as a misdirection, allowing for an immediately escape.

This was completely out of Dong Xuan'er's expectations! She blankly stood in place before her face deeply blushed. Just as she thought to furiously pursue Han Li, the four puppet beasts fired light beams on her.

Dong Xuan'er could only wait until after the light beams faded away before hastily withdrawing her light barrier. But by that time, Han Li had already turned into a black dot in the distance and was about to disappear from sight.

Naturally, Dong Xuan'er was unwilling to allow Han Li's trickery succeed. By making use of her wondrous movement technique, she ignored the four puppet beasts and set off in hot pursuit.

But a short moment later, that black dot in the sky flashed several more times and disappeared without a trace.

With a furious expression, Dong Xuan'er swept the vicinity without finding a single trace of Han Li. She had no choice but to give up her pursuit of them and dejectedly return.

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At this moment, Han Li was hiding in a loose earth mound to rest. A yellow barrier of light covered Han Li from all sides, but it didn't feel stuffy at all. It was quite fantastic.

Han Li hadn't thought that this low grade "Earthsink Talisman", would prove to be useful someday. It seems that keeping all the

talismans he possessed on his body was a correct decision.

A moment later, he felt that Dong Xuan'er had left. Without leaving concealment, he carefully used his spiritual sense and confirmed that Dong Xuan'er truly wasn't there before leaving the earth mound and speedily flying away.

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Many hours later, Han Li carried the masked woman into the dry hollow of a large tree. The tree hollow's previous master, a huge bear, was lying dismembered outside the cave.

Han Li gently lowered the masked woman to the ground and gripped her flawless wrist with deep concern, slowly releasing spiritual power into her blood vessels to take a look at her injuries.

However, Han Li regretted having done such a rash action immediately afterwards.

Upon pouring just a slight amount of spiritual power into her body, a huge attractive force suddenly appeared and caused Han Li's spiritual power to wildly flood into her like a dam had broken.

Han Li was greatly alarmed and attempted to let go, but he found that his hands were firmly stuck and was unable to break free. Unexpectedly, his other hand was also helplessly caught by this attractive force, causing his magic power to flow out at double the speed.

Han Li was aghast as he felt every drop of his bitterly cultivated true essence forcefully sucked out by the masked woman. To make matters worse, the attractive force only grew stronger as time passed by, making Han Li lose his head from panic!

Not daring to repeat the same mistake by trying to by pushing her off with his legs, Han Li was at his wit's end as his hands continued to be rigidly stuck.

Han Li could only helplessly stare on as his mid Foundation Establishment cultivation degraded to early Foundation Establishment, and then as early Foundation Establishment fell into Qi Condensation, and...

As he felt his heart bleed, Han Li found that he could not longer endure and his gaze blackened before he fainted and fell onto the body of the masked woman.

“Fragrant... and soft!” Before Han Li lost consciousness, this single lustful thought flashed through his mind.

As such, a man and a woman were intimately tangled with one another in a quiet cave. But as both people were unconscious, Han Li's spiritual power still continued to slowly and uncontrollably flow into the woman's body.

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After an unknown amount of time, Han Li eventually woke up in

a daze.

But just as he drowsily opened his eyes, Han Li found himself looking at an attractive, slender silhouette standing outside the tree cave, surveying the scene outside with her back facing Han Li.

Han Li blankly looked on for a moment before feeling a severe headache. After holding back his voice with great difficulty, he recalled the event before he passed out. Fearful, Han Li hastily used his spiritual sense to examine his body.

His felt his heart drop to the deepest depths. Not only did his cultivation revert back to Qi Condensation, it had dropped to the third layer. He was left completely dumbfounded as if he had been struck by lightning.

While Han Li was at a loss, the slender woman softly asked without turning her head, “You’re awake?”

Han Li woke from his stupor, and with an unsightly expression, he couldn’t help but furiously ask, “Nangong Wan, what happened? I saved you with good intentions yet you absorbed my magic power.”

“Nangong Wan? You know my elder cousin?” The woman finally turned around. She had already taken off her hood, allowing Han Li to clearly see her face.

Han Li was shocked!

Although her extremely beautiful appearance was quite similar to Nangong Wan, her delicate oval face along with her delicate eyebrows were completely unfamiliar to Han Li.

“Who are you? How is this possible? I clearly heard the Devil Dao cultivators called you ‘Senior Nangong! And your voice...” Han Li blankly murmured to himself in complete confusion.

But suddenly, his complexion turned deathly pale and couldn’t bring himself to speak further.

This was because he finally recalled the clear but subtle difference between this woman’s voice and Nangong Wan’s voice. Her voice was more hoarse. At the time, he had believed that Nangong Wan was severely injured, causing her voice to change as a result. However, this oversight had caused this mishap to occur. Not only did he mistakenly rescue someone, but his cultivation had been sucked dry by the person he rescued.

Over ten years of bitter cultivation had completely disappeared in a day!

As Han Li felt both dismay and dejection, his complexion alternated between red and white.

This female cultivator, who claimed to be Nangong Wan’s younger cousin, gave Han Li a dignified smile and said something that left him stunned. “Are you Yellow Maple Valley’s Han Li?”

“How does Senior know my name?” Han Li’s spirit strongly shook. Since he saw that this woman had no intentions of killing him and with reassuring thoughts of the ‘Three Essence Revolutions Technique’, he managed to calm down.

“Elder Cousin and I are as close as sisters. We hide nothing from each other. She had spoken to me about your previous incident!” The woman’s expression was indifferent; neither joy nor anger could be made out.

Han Li was speechless.

“Did you know? When I found out of this incident, my first thought was to run over to Yellow Maple Valley and dismember you into eight pieces, feeding your corpse to the dogs!” The woman’s eyes suddenly flashed with cold light. Her words were filled with a murderous tone, leaving Han Li pale.

Chapter 362: Nangong Bing

The woman appeared as gentle as always, but her words were as cold as a blade's edge, causing Han Li's heart to tremble.

Han Li let out a long sigh, before saying something that left the woman somewhat surprised, "Did Senior change her mind in the end?"

"It seems you aren't completely useless! At the very least, you seem to have some brains." The woman calmly said.

"If Senior truly wished to kill me, I never would have had the chance to open my eyes!" Han Li chuckled.

"I am called Nangong Bing. Don't call me Senior this or Senior that! It will make me seem old." The woman expressionlessly turned her head back and spoke with an unquestionable tone.

Han Li was stunned and inwardly insulted her, 'Since you're a Core Formation cultivator, doesn't that make you the age of an ancient woman in mortal's years?'

As Han Li's true essence had been absorbed by her, he naturally held a bellyful of stifled hate towards her. But since his life was currently in her hands, he could only inwardly curse at her.

"Although I was mistaken for my elder cousin yesterday and was rescued under that presumption, in the end, you are still my

savior! Furthermore, I unintentionally absorbed your true essence afterwards which did stabilize my injuries.” The woman leisurely spoke with her back facing Han Li.

“Let’s leave it be. Since your esteemed self is Nangong Wan’s younger cousin, I was just out of luck!” Han Li wrinkled his brow and spoke with a tone of helplessness. Afterwards, he stretched his arms and stood.

Papa. Han Li saw a white silhouette flash by, carrying a fragrant wind. The woman then gave him two heavy slaps, causing him to spin in place and fall to the floor.

“You...” Han Li covered his stinging cheeks in astonishment and looked at Nangong Bing in furious surprise.

“Yesterday, you actually dared to touch my body with your hands without permission! Furthermore, you dared to lay... lay down on me while I was unconscious! Those two slaps were only to reprimand you!” Nangong Bing spoke with a cold voice. But when she mentioned that Han Li had lain down on her, her face turned slightly red for just a moment.

Han Li was at a loss for words.

To give justifications for his breach of etiquette against a female Core Formation cultivator was simply asking for trouble. If he were to dispute it, it was likely he’d be met with another two slaps! And now, with his cheeks feeling raw, there was absolutely no way he could do such a thing!

Furthermore, he faintly felt that the reason why she was treating him this way wasn't because of his actions yesterday. She was most likely venting her anger for what had happened between him and Nangong Wan.

With that in mind, Han Li strongly suppressed the fury in his heart and lightly caressed his swollen cheeks in silence.

Nangong Bing was somewhat surprised to see that Han Li had decided to tactfully let the matter go.

She had expected that Han Li would want to argue over yesterday's actions. In that event, she had planned to further embarrass Han Li without any explanation. But now that Han Li was tactfully silent, she had no excuse to further act.

As a result, she could only snort and speak bluntly, "Since that matter has been resolved with the previous slaps, I must address the repayment of your great kindness. You have two choices. One is that I give you enough spirit stones to leave you at a loss for words. This would be payment for both your kind assistance and the loss of your cultivation.

"As for the second choice, you could follow me back to my evacuated sect members. After our six sects restabilize, I can refine spirit pills and find a young female disciple from my sect for you to pair cultivate with, restoring your original cultivation at the quickest speed. As you've only lost your true essence, your recultivation will meet no bottlenecks. According to my estimates,

you should be able to recover your original cultivation in less than twenty years. Naturally, I would be happy to perhaps repay you with a few of my own sect's secret techniques during that time. Our Masked Moon Sect differs from the varied and disorganized techniques of your Yellow Maple Valley. Our sect has many secret techniques that are wondrous beyond imagination which cannot be divulged to outsiders. The technique I used to unintentionally absorb your cultivation yesterday is one of such techniques." After Nangong Bing said this with pride, she calmly stared at Han Li, waiting for his decision.

Han Li was lost in amazement. These two choices had a stunningly huge disparity!

One choice was to just leave him be with spirit stones. As for the other, not only would she assist him with restoring his cultivation, she would also find him a pair cultivation partner and willingly teach him a few secret techniques. As Han Li heard this, he became more convinced that this woman deliberately wanted him to choose the second option! This was truly strange. Could it be that she had arranged a trap for him?

He hesitantly glanced at Nangong Bing and saw an indistinct but complex expression as if she was both expectant and anxious.

Han Li's mind blanked in confusion. He gave his nose a firm rub and then folded his arms. With his right hand grasping his chin, he entered deep contemplation.

Han Li remained silent for no less than the time it took for a stick of incense to burn. But Nangong Bing could no longer wait and

hastily asked, “How about it? Have you come to a decision?”

Han Li lifted his head and saw that she wore an impatient expression. After taking a thoughtful glance at her, he unhurriedly said, “I’ve decided. I choose the first option! Senior only has to give me the spirit stones. Senior need not worry further about me. I will think about how to recover my cultivation on my own!” Han Li wore an indifferent expression.

When Nangong Bing heard Han Li’s decision, she stared blankly before revealing a somewhat odd expression. She stared at Han Li’s face for a moment before suddenly raising her hand, throwing over a red storage pouch.

“The spirit stones are in there. There are also a few commonly used materials inside.” Nangong Bing’s tone was gloomy and cold.

Han Li didn’t pay her tone any mind and caught the storage pouch without formality, sweeping his spiritual sense through it. Although he had prepared himself, he was still astounded upon seeing the many tens of mid-grade spirit stones in the bag as well as an assortment of all kinds of materials.

Han Li suddenly revealed some joy and raised his head, eagerly asking, “Does Senior have any more pieces of origin jade that she can spare?”

The woman’s eyes flashed with surprise. After wordlessly searching her body for a moment, she handed Han Li several pieces of white jade, much to his delight.

He had now acquired the materials needed for restoring the transportation formation. He no longer had to go out and search for them.

Nangong Bing coldly stared at Han Li before expressionlessly saying, "Is there anything else? If not, then I will take my leave."

"Oh... There is nothing left to trouble Senior with!" Han Li shook his head after correcting his expression.

Nangong Bing then gave a charming snort before turning around and leaving the tree hollow.

But before she walked outside, she turned her head over and calmly said, "Han Li, I don't know whether your choice was made out of stupidity or because you think yourself to be clever!" A jade sword flew out from her sleeve. Her white silhouette blurred before appearing on the sword.

At that moment, Han Li lazily said something from behind her, "Senior, please don't forget to send my regards to Nangong Wan!"

Nangong Bing froze for a moment before wordlessly turning into a streak of white light, leaving the tree hollow far behind. It was unknown whether she had agreed or if she had completely ignored him.

Han Li bitterly laughed and rubbed his nose, simply dropping down to sit on the ground. He blankly stared outside the entrance and became lost in thought.

He still didn't understand how his cultivation was absorbed by that woman. Could it be that the techniques of the Masked Moon Sect were truly so overbearing? Was it even more strange than the Black Fiend School's blood sacrifice?

However, Han Li believed that this cultivation art that absorbed other's cultivation was certain to have many restrictions and flaws. Otherwise, the Masked Moon Sect's cultivators would have long been at war with the cultivation world.

Han Li's presumption was somewhat correct.

It was a complete coincidence that Nangong Bing was able to absorb his true essence. After having made full use of her secret technique earlier, her own true essence had been greatly damaged. Had nothing happened, her cultivation would've faced a great decline. Although it wasn't enough to make her descend back into Foundation Establishment, she was certain to face a loss of several tens of years of bitter cultivation.

In addition, she believed that she would've fallen into the hands of the Devil Dao cultivators once her secret technique lost its effect. As a result, she clenched her teeth and activated the divine ability of her cultivation art, the "True Art of Reincarnation".

Once this divine ability was used, anybody who used spiritual

power to probe her body would have their true essence forcefully absorbed by the true essence whirlpool formed inside her body. Had she not awoken early and halted her technique, she would've absorbed every last shred of Han Li's cultivation.

Naturally, the restrictions of this strange divine ability were extremely demanding.

First of all, it required that her true essence was in a state of great deficiency.

Secondly, if she didn't absorb anybody's true essence during the duration of this technique, her true essence would explode, causing her to die. It could be said that this technique was partially suicidal.

But what made this technique the most undesirable was the fact that even if the user absorbed someone else's true essence, they would only be able to recover a fraction of their lost cultivation. This technique was unable to be used to increase one's magic power or cultivation.

Chapter 363: Transfer

Not long after that, Han Li walked out of the tree hollow and flew off.

Han Li was even more cautious this time around. During his entire journey, he used his spiritual sense to its greatest extent. Upon hearing even the wind rustling the grass, he would immediately go into hiding. After all, it would be extremely dangerous to negligently run into a cultivator with his current cultivation.

Thus with paranoid levels of carefulness, Han Li eventually arrived back at his underground cave after taking up nearly twice the time he had been away. Only after he entered his Five Elements Reversal Formation did he truly let out a breath of relief.

As for Crooked Soul, he was still obediently sitting at the side of the formation. When Han Li saw that Crooked Soul had remained in the exact same posture that he had left him in, he couldn't help but smile.

Han Li knew that restoring his cultivation wasn't a matter requiring merely three or four years. As such, he didn't meditate or take any pills to cultivate. Instead, he spent the following days wholeheartedly focused on restoring the ancient transportation formation.

Under his current circumstances, travelling to a country far away was much too dangerous. He could only hope that he would be able

to use the ancient transportation formation after restoring it.

Although Han Li's cultivation had greatly declined, it did not obstruct his restoration work. After a sleepless week, he had completely finished its restoration.

Han Li, a normally cool-headed person, felt his heart stir as he looked at the completed ancient transportation formation.

He was at the most crucial step with regards to failure or success. He had to test whether another transportation formation was safely connected to his. If the other end of the transportation formation was damaged or if it no longer existed, then it would naturally be of no use. He could only bury his thoughts of using the transportation formation and find another path forward.

With that in mind, Han Li calmly placed down low-grade spirit stones one after another on the edge of the transportation formation.

When he finished placing the last spirit stones, Han Li hastily took several steps back and couldn't help but look on with bated breath.

This ancient formation that was created countless years ago suddenly hummed and flashed with yellow radiance before quickly fading away into darkness.

Han Li's heart dropped! Could it be that the ancient

transportation formation on the other end was disabled? This would mean that everything he had done was a complete waste!

Han Li couldn't help but reveal complete disappointment. But still, he was unresigned. He began walking in circles around the transportation formation with hands behind his back while occasionally muttering to himself.

He suddenly stopped and tightly creased his brow as if he had thought of something. He then crouched down and picked up the low-grade spirit stone at the center of the formation.

Han Li took a close look at it and let out a breath of cold air. The spirit stone was spent and no longer held any trace of Spiritual Qi.

Han Li revealed a thoughtful expression before suddenly brightening up. Without the slightest hesitation, he took out several sparkling mid-grade spirit stones and exchanged them with the low-grade spirit stones he had placed down before.

If he had guessed correctly, the formation didn't activate because low-grade spirit stones provided an insufficient amount of Spiritual Qi.

After placing down the final spirit stone, the transportation formation immediately started to emit a muffled hum before erupting with huge spiritual ripples. A blinding yellow light shot out from the center of the formation spell and shot outside the cave. The Five Elements Reversal Formation was unable to block it in the slightest.

When Han Li saw this, he was stunned. But something immediately came to mind, and his face turned deathly pale.

At nearly the same time, he suddenly heard huge rumbling sounds from outside the cave. Although he was protected by the huge formation, Han Li still felt the earth-quaking vibrations.

Han Li's expression grew tense, and he hastily beckoned Crooked Soul as he walked toward the transportation formation.

He couldn't help but hesitate. He truly had no idea where the transportation formation would take him. He had originally planned to verify what kind of place was at the other end. After confirming the absence of danger, he would then decide whether or not he should remain there. But now that the ancient transportation formation was exposed, this would be a trip of no return.

While Han Li was hesitating, he heard a frightening boom from above and looked up in fright.

He saw that the cave roof had been ripped away by some unknown magic tool and blinding sunlight shot through, clearly illuminating what was occurring in the cave. A large group of Devil Dao cultivators hovered above the now-exposed cave. They all revealed astonishment once they saw Han Li and the ancient transportation formation shining with yellow light.

"You again?" A furious yell came from the crowd of Devil Dao

cultivators. Three people flew out.

The one in the middle wore a silver mask, the Ghost Spirit Sect's Young Master Wang Chan. Two eccentrics stood beside him: a shriveled, white-haired old man and a young child with red lips and white teeth — the Li Brothers who previously appeared at Yan Ling Castle.

“Ancient Transportation Formation!” When the Li Brothers saw the origin of yellow radiance, they couldn't help but look at each other and shout out in pleasant surprise.

Wang Chan stared blankly for a moment. He then asked ecstatically, “Did you see correctly? Is it really an Ancient Transportation Formation?” Wang Chan's voice trembled slightly. He clearly understood what an intact ancient transportation formation signified for one's sect.

The shriveled Li Brother chuckled. Just as he thought of saying something, his expression suddenly grew stricken, “Not good! That brat is about to use it. Quickly, stop him!” As he said this, he shot a streak of black light straight toward Han Li.

He knew that once the transportation formation was activated, there would be a moment of delay before it could be used. That delay was more than enough for him to kill any junior several times over.

But just as his magic treasure flew into the cave, a brilliant light erupted, and a rainbow barrier blocked the streak of black light.

The old man was surprised for a moment but immediately recovered. With a sinister expression, he yelled, “Everyone, attack! This brat has laid down a formation spell. We must break through it as quickly as possible or else it will be too late!”

Upon hearing the order from their sect elder, the Devil Dao cultivators promptly released their magic tools as if they had woken up from a dream. Even Wang Chan and the childlike Li Brother struck down upon the spell formation.

Han Li’s Five Elements Reversal Formation was merely a simplified version of the grand formation. Under the attacks of two Core Formation cultivators and a crowd of Foundation Establishment cultivators, the rainbow light barrier immediately distorted and appeared as if it were about to collapse.

At that moment, Han Li had already brought Crooked Soul with him to the center of the formation. With a command medallion in hand and tightly shut eyes, he muttered under his breath, completely ignoring the attacks of the Devil Dao cultivators.

“A Greater Displacement Medallion! That brat actually has such a magic tool?” The old man snarled in a fluster upon clearly seeing the command medallion in Han Li’s hand. He suddenly linked his hands together and a huge amount of black light threads surged, shooting down at the light barrier below.

The formation released several cries before finally reaching its limit and the rainbow light barrier exploded!

Without the strange rainbow light to protect him, the overbearing wave of attacks was about to engulf Han Li.

But at that very moment, Han Li opened his eyes and spouted out one word with an icy tone, “Transfer!”

The yellow light suddenly surged. Within the yellow radiance, Han Li and Crooked Soul disappeared without a trace. The wave of attacks had completely missed their mark.

The Devil Dao cultivators in the sky were left dumbstruck.

The complexions of Wang Chan and the Li Brothers were ashen. Since they didn’t have a Greater Displacement Medallion, they were unable to chase after Han Li.

A moment later, the transportation formation’s yellow light suddenly faded away. Upon seeing this, Wang Chan and his guards grew incomparably furious.

Naturally, they knew that Han Li, the one who had just used this formation, had destroyed the other end. Even if they found a Greater Displacement Medallion, they would be unable to use the formation.

Wang Chan, with bitter resentment still fresh in his heart, was unwilling to give up. Using his status as the sect’s Young Master, he sent for several cultivators to guard the formation day and

night for the mere purpose of preventing Han Li from escaping should he repair the formation and return. If that time came, he would make certain to capture Han Li alive and properly repay him for the great kindness of repeatedly obstructing his plans.

But shortly afterwards, the Devil Dao would begin the next step of their expansion, and the Ghost Spirit Sect's Young Master would start to oversee campaigns in other areas. As a result, this matter was quickly dropped to the back of his mind.

As for the cultivation world of the Heavenly South Region, it would remain in turmoil for a long time to come.

In the next two years, a union would be formed by the remaining countries to resist the powers of the Devil Dao and Righteous Dao Alliance, known as the "Heavenly Dao Union"; this created a third superpower within the Heavenly South Region.

The three superpowers had near equal strength and campaigned against one another. After a short amount of time, it seemed that they had reached a stalemate.

As for the Six Sects, they eventually arrived at the Nine Nations Union. They contended with the local sects for natural resources such as spirit veins and spirit stone mines, managing to establish a new foothold. Naturally, if the Moulan Tribe's Spell Soldiers were to invade the nine countries, the six sects would dispatch men to combat them. They no longer possessed the same leisure they had back at the State of Yue.

As a result, many Foundation Establishment cultivators and Core Formation experts perished in battle against the Spell Soldiers. Han Li's former master, Li Huayuan, was one such example, dying in an intense battle that took place over ten years later.

But in contrast, a new generation of Six Sect cultivators quickly matured. Many Core Formation cultivators eventually rose from the ranks of their Foundation Establishment cultivators...

Chapter 364: An Isolated Island And A Huge Ship

‘My head feels heavy!’ This was the first thought that came to Han Li’s mind upon waking up.

After Han Li and Crooked Soul started the transfer, he felt immense pressure from the yellow light enveloping him. But fortunately, the Greater Displacement Medallion promptly released a faint azure light, causing the pressure to immediately disappear at the cost of it wildly draining the spiritual power in his body.

However, Han Li was prepared and wasn’t alarmed. This change caused by the “Greater Displacement Medallion” had been described in ancient records.

In an instant, the medallion stopped absorbing Spiritual Qi and the yellow light around him faded away. He and Crooked Soul had arrived in a dark, indistinct place.

As there was very little light, Han Li was unable to clearly see his surroundings. But based on the silence, there shouldn’t be anyone nearby. Han Li felt relieved and walked out of the spell formation.

But he felt a sudden burst of dizziness after just a few steps. His legs grew soft and he fell on his behind, feeling the urge to vomit from his discomfort. Han Li knew that the long distance teleportation had left him feeling unwell, and the severity of his current discomfort was caused by his low cultivation.

However, now was not the time to deal with it. He quickly commanded Crooked Soul to destroy the transportation formation.

Crook Soul expressionlessly took out the huge silver sword he was previously given and chopped the spell formation into pieces.

When Han Li saw this, he finally relaxed. He then sat on the ground and rested for a moment, eventually adapting to the darkness of the cave.

He had a vague feeling that this room seemed to have been abandoned a long time ago. Not only was it pitch-black, there was also a dense smell of decay. He touched the floor to find a thick layer of dust.

This caused Han Li to feel more at ease. At the very least, nothing dangerous would appear for the time being.

A long while later, Han Li's feeling of discomfort eventually passed, and he stood up using his hand to support him.

After that, Han Li took out a moonlight stone from his storage pouch and was able to clearly see the room. Just as he had suspected, this place was a stone room that had been uninhabited for a long time. There was nothing of note except for a stone door across from him.

Han Li turned his head to glance at the destroyed transportation formation. After a moment of hesitation, he turned his attention to the door and attempted to forcefully push it open. Much to his surprise, Han Li was able to easily open it.

“This is...” Han Li was astonished.

A huge flight of limestone stairs appeared before him. He slowly turned his gaze upward and saw that there was no end. Just like the room, the stairs also had a layer of dust on them. It was clear that no one had come here for quite some time.

After taking another look back at the room behind him, he discovered that the stone room was actually a small mountain cave.

Han Li pondered for a moment before lightly shaking his head with ridicule. He then slowly climbed up the stairs with Crooked Soul following behind him.

The flight of stairs wasn't very long. After turning a corner, Han Li was already able to see the exit. A huge mountain rock was blocking the round exit.

Han Li wrinkled his brow and commanded Crooked Soul without the slightest hesitation, “Split it open!” Han Li then took a step to the side.

Crooked Soul moved forward with a large stride and grasped the

silver sword above his head. He easily chopped the rock into pieces as if it were soft tofu, allowing blinding sunlight to seep in along with a burst of fresh air.

Han Li took a deep breath in and out.

Ever since he was teleported here, he had held his breath, unwilling to breathe due to the strange scent within the cave. The fresh air was a liberation from the suffocating atmosphere.

However, he was a bit confused as to why the air was moist and had a faintly salty taste. He had never smelled such a unique scent before.

With that question in mind, Han Li walked past Crooked Soul and took a look outside with eyes squinting from the blazing sun.

Han Li was left stunned by what he saw. As far as the eye could see, he saw endless expanse of dark-blue water.

Han Li was lost in amazement for a long while before finally waking up.

‘Could this be the legendary sea?’ Han Li thought with pleasant surprise.

The largest bodies of water Han Li had seen previously were the huge hundred-meter-wide rivers at the Lan Province. He had heard of such a vast, limitless ocean in books, but now that he saw it with

his own eyes, he felt a huge shock unlike any other.

After gazing at the scene from above, Han Li lowered his head and thought about his location, revealing some confusion a few moments later.

He was located on a relatively tall cliff and while the bottom of the cliff wasn't far, it bordered a huge ocean. Waves from the huge ocean repeatedly struck against the reef below.

Stroking his chin, Han Li pondered for a while.

The color of this ocean's water was entirely different from the description of the endless sea, as it appeared to be the color of a normal sea. It seemed that he had been transported from the Heavenly South Region to the coastline of some unknown region.

Nevertheless, there was nothing that he could recognize here. Being outside of the Heavenly South Region, he felt uncertain and wasn't able to make out any familiar features in this place.

With that in mind, Han Li didn't immediately set off on his magic tool. Instead, he closed his eyes and slowly released his spiritual sense to see whether there were any cultivators nearby.

After the time it took to make a cup of tea, Han Li withdrew his spiritual sense and revealed a strange expression.

He wordlessly released his Divine Wind Boat. With a flash of

light, he soared through the sky without the slightest effort at concealment. After he was about a hundred meters in the air, Han Li stopped and stood at the front of the boat, surveying the scenery around him.

Everything he saw was tinted with deep blue light. The sparkling light of the sea's rippling waves blurred Han Li's vision.

He was above an isolated island about six kilometers wide. As for the cliff he flew out of, it was only a small protruding hill on the island.

Han Li stroked his nose and bitterly smiled.

This was truly troublesome! Although there seemed to be no danger here, he was unable to cultivate on this island. The island's Spiritual Qi was extremely thin.

If he wanted to mature spiritual herbs, he would require a place with adequate Spiritual Qi. Otherwise, the green liquid would be ineffective. In addition, due to the strong spiritual nature of precious spiritual herbs, abundant Spiritual Qi was required. This left Han Li feeling very helpless!

Han Li sailed around the island once through and found that there weren't any other islands nearby. In addition, this small island had no life aside from mountainous trees and small snakes.

As a result, he could only sigh and return to the cave.

Once he returned, Han Li first slept off his headache without any interruptions. He had previously worked on restoring the formation over many days without sleeping, leaving him completely exhausted. These problems were best tackled after he had slept his fill!

With Crooked Soul guarding him, Han Li slept soundly for an entire day.

Once he woke up, Han Li stood alone atop the mountain and stared at the sea while lost in thought.

After an unknown amount of time, Han Li expressionlessly flew down the mountain and found a suitably sized stone to block the cave.

Then, with Crooked Soul on board, he circled the vicinity on his boat and confirmed the direction of the setting sun before flying off without hesitation.

Han Li guessed that since there was nobody on the island with the transportation formation, there must be some other island or land nearby. Otherwise, who would head out to the middle of nowhere and construct such an expensive Ancient Transportation Formation.

Naturally, Han Li didn't know which direction was correct. He had already decided to fly in this direction for several days. If there were no traces of any cultivators or mortals, he would go back and fly in a different direction.

Although this method was extremely clumsy, it was Han Li's only choice in this unfamiliar sea. In any case, he had plenty of spirit stones in his storage pouch; he didn't have to worry about running out of spiritual power.

Perhaps Han Li's luck was especially good that day, he only had to fly for half a day before finding a huge seafaring ship.

Han Li was delighted. After all, dealing with mortals would be much smoother compared to negotiating with cultivators!

But Han Li felt a bit baffled upon looking at the huge ship. The hull of the ship strangely had no mast or sails. At the ship bow, there were over ten huge fish quickly pulling the ship forward.

Although these fish had huge bodies and a mouth filled with sharp teeth, he felt that they didn't possess the slightest Spiritual Qi and weren't demonic beasts by any measure. If this were not the case, Han Li wouldn't have dared to go near the ship.

Chapter 365: Wang Changqing

Han Li gazed at those huge ten-meter-long fish from a distance and flew around the ship twice before finally deciding to head towards it.

It was clear that those on the ship had seen Han Li coming. With a few loud shouts, a huge crowd of over three hundred people amassed, filling the entire bow of the ship.

Once these people saw Han Li hovering in midair, they revealed reverence and started to bow and salute Han Li.

While Han Li was amazed by the display, a luxuriously dressed middle-aged man stepped forward from the crowd and nervously said something. He helplessly stood by as if he were waiting for Han Li's command.

Han Li stroked his nose and bitterly laughed. He wasn't able to understand or make sense of a single word of their language. The question of how to communicate with them made his head hurt.

Seeing that Han Li didn't reply, the middle-aged man grew panicked and urgently said something. Although Han Li didn't understand what he said, he was able to make out what he meant.

Han Li wrinkled his brow. After some thought, he spoke out in the common tongue of the Heavenly South Region, "If there is anyone here that can understand my words, please tell me!" Han Li then swept his gaze across the crowd.

The middle-aged man appeared at a loss. It was quite obvious that he didn't understand what Han Li had said. As for the others, they were also left baffled.

Han Li helplessly sighed and started to use the words of several different ancient languages, using them each once through. He had initially learned these ancient languages in order to cultivate tongue twisting incantations, but he hadn't mastered them in the slightest. Eventually, a gray haired old man from the crowd seemed to have reacted to one of the languages.

Han Li felt overjoyed upon seeing this and pointed toward the old man.

“Old man, do you understand my words?” Han Li slowly spoke using the ancient language. As he didn't use the language often, he was very unfamiliar with it.

When the old man heard Han Li, he hesitated for a moment before walking to the side of the middle aged man. Also using the ancient language, he respectfully replied, “This old man, Wang Changqing, had indeed learned this Immortal Clan's language when he was young. Does this Immortal Master have any commands?”

Han Li revealed a slight smile upon seeing that the old man had understood the ancient language. His figure suddenly flashed and he appeared beside the old man, startling both the old and middle-aged man.

Han Li spoke with a gentle tone, “As you well know, I am not able to speak the local tongue. I only passed by here to ask about a few matters. There is no need to panic!”

He had previously swept his spiritual sense throughout the huge boat and found that the ship only housed mortals. Because he found no cultivators, he was able to descend without worry.

Han Li didn’t pay notice to the mutterings of the old and middle-aged man. Instead, he beckoned to his Divine Wind Boat in the sky, causing it to slowly descend toward the ship bow.

After Crooked Soul got off the Divine Wind Boat, the small boat quickly shrunk into a small white light and flew into Han Li’s hand.

After this was done, Han Li took a sideways glance.

Although the mortals on the ship saw this, they didn’t appear shocked at all and maintained their original reverent expression. They were clearly accustomed to seeing cultivators and their tricks. Otherwise, they wouldn’t have appeared nearly as calm. Also, since these people didn’t seem to come from particularly exceptional backgrounds, it appeared that it wasn’t taboo for the cultivators of this land to reveal themselves to mortals.

Han Li thought with a pensive expression.

Currently, the old man had translated Han Li's words for the middle-aged man. The middle-aged man was initially shocked before revealing pleasant surprise. He then said a long string of unintelligible words towards Han Li with an extremely excited expression.

Han Li felt at a loss and couldn't help but turn his gaze towards the old man.

The old man naturally understood what Han Li meant. He quickly gave Han Li an explanation, "Great Immortal, this man is Sir Gu, the master of this ship. He intends to invite you to reside as a guest at his residence on the Stalwart Stars Island. He is willing to supply the resources for your cultivation."

"Stalwart Stars Island?" Han Li rubbed his chin and gave a noncommittal response.

Seeing that Han Li wore an indifferent expression, the middle aged man became even more fervent and uttered another long string of words. This time, he revealed an apologetic smile. Han Li didn't need the old man's translation to understand why he wanted to invite Han Li to stay on the Stalwart Stars Island.

Without waiting for the old man to translate, Han Li bluntly waved his hand and said, "First, tell this ship's master that I am new to this noble land and am unfamiliar with the local conventions. Consequently, I am not able to agree to anything. I will decide whether I want to stay on his Stalwart Stars Island after I am given an explanation. Also, I currently do not understand your language. I hope he will allow me to follow this ship for a few

days so that I may learn the local language and a few local conventions from you in passing.”

Not daring to slight Han Li, he hurriedly gave the middle-aged man a translation.

When the middle aged man heard Han Li, he revealed obvious disappointment. But still, he respectfully saluted Han Li and loudly yelled a few words behind him. Suddenly, everyone on the bow withdrew from the deck like a swarm of bees. After giving the old man his reply, he also withdrew.

As such, only Han Li and the old man remained at the ship’s bow.

The old man smiled to Han Li and said, “Immortal Master, Master Gu has agreed to your request. In addition, he has given you a room on the ship. Please follow me.”

Han Li agreed, indifferently nodding his head. As such, Han Li and Crooked Soul followed the old man, Wang Changqing, into the ship.

‘It’s certainly large!’ That was Han Li’s first thought upon entering the ship’s hold. The ship’s hold had paths and corridors in every direction and an unknown number of rooms. Whenever a mortal saw Han Li, they revealed reverent expressions and made way for Han Li.

After several turns, Han Li and Crooked Soul arrived at a

comparatively large wooden door.

Wang Changqing pushed open the door without any hesitation and stepped to the side, inviting Han Li to enter first. Han Li didn't bother being polite and entered the room with Crooked Soul in tow, taking a look around afterwards.

The room was quite decent! Not only was it quite large, it also didn't feel stuffy at all. But what caused Han Li to be most curious was a small odd tree in a flower pot in the corner of the room.

The tree was perfectly straight and was completely branchless with palm-sized triangular leaves growing all over it. In addition, the entire tree glittered with silver light as if it were made out of pure silver. Upon seeing the tree, Han Li revealed great curiosity..

When the old man saw Han Li's amazement, he respectfully gave Han Li an explanation, "It seems that Immortal Master hasn't seen a Silver Angled Tree before. It really is an uncommon rarity. Not only is it a gorgeous sight, it freshens and cleans the air when placed inside. It is a seldom seen treasure for seafarers. It is only because our ship master is such an domineeringly rich man that he was able to acquire four of them."

Han Li faintly smiled but remained silent. How could he not make out that this Wang Changqing was trying to curry favor on the ship master's behalf?

Han Li had Crooked Soul guard the door and sat down in the room's chair. Wang Changqing reservedly stood at Han Li's side,

not daring to sit down as he pleased.

Han Li smiled from seeing his restraint and amiably said, “Mister Wang, there is no need to be so formal. Please take a seat. There are a few things that I’d like to discuss with you.”

Wang Changqing repeatedly stated that he didn’t dare to in a manner of reverence and trepidation.

Han Li wrinkled his brow in response and didn’t press him any further.

After a short moment of thought, he straightforwardly asked, “I am a cultivator that came here from another land. I was wondering if Mister Wang could give me an introduction to the nearby regions and customs. Naturally, the more that you can tell me about matters pertaining to cultivators, the better. I will certainly give this elderly man my thanks!” As Han Li spoke, his expression was tranquil as can be.

Wang Changqing pondered for a moment before slowly saying, “Since Immortal Master came from a foreign land, then I must first tell you that this place is the Scattered Stars Sea. We are in the southwest quadrant of this area. The three great islands nearby are the Tail Star Island, Stalwart Star Island, and Sang Star Island. Naturally, there are also many islands of smaller sizes with both cultivators and mortals living on each.

“We share the same conventions as those of other territorial waters. Every island has an island lord, a cultivator with the

greatest magic power that is responsible for protecting the island. If other cultivators wish settle on the island and are willing to hold an office, they will be given a set amount of spirit stones from the island lord every year, but they must obey the island lord's commands. Naturally, if one were to reside on an island and was unwilling to hold an office, they would be required to give the island lord a set amount of spirit stones every year if they wished to remain on the island."

With that said, Wang Changqing paused, revealing an expression of admiration as if he held great longing towards cultivators.

Chapter 366: Master Gu's Business

Wang Changqing continued, “Mortals that live on these islands must perform labor or pay spirit stones; otherwise, they aren’t allowed to reside on the island. Because of the Immortal Techniques that were placed on these islands, there is no need to fear assault from heavenly winds or demonic beasts. As such, us mortals may live without fear. In addition, the Immortal Masters’ powers are remarkable. Whenever us mortals travel afar, we spare no effort to hire one or two Immortal Masters to accompany us. That way if we come across any demonic beasts while at sea, we will have a chance at living. Naturally, the Immortal Masters that agree to be hired would be comparatively free when compared to those previously mentioned.”

“Heavenly wind?” Han Li was puzzled upon hearing those words.

He knew about demonic beasts, but hadn’t heard of this “Heavenly Wind” before.

“The previous land that Immortal Master resided in didn’t have attacks by heavenly wind?” The old man appeared to be marveled.

“I saw no heavenly winds where I previously cultivated. What are they? Something comparable to demonic beasts?” Han Li calmly asked without care.

Although Wang Changqing felt doubtful, he still gave Han Li a sincere explanation, “Heavenly winds, demonic beasts, and ghost mists are known as the three great natural disasters in the

Scattered Star Seas. There is no need to speak of demonic beasts. Immortal Master surely knows about them more than I, but it should be known that most of the demonic beasts of the sea are beyond huge and are proficient in water attribute demonic techniques. Us mortals have no way of dealing with them. Only Immortals are able to strike them down.”

“As for heavenly winds, they are hurricanes that occur twice a year that sweep through the entirety of the Scattered Star Seas. The areas it passes suffer from monstrous sea waves, destroying lives and shelters. If we were not on an island protected by immortal techniques, us mortals would face certain doom. It is also said that if an Immortal were to be dragged into a heavenly wind, it would be extremely difficult to escape, and they would likely die within.” Wang Changqing appeared fearful as he said this.

“And the ghost mist? What kind of natural disaster is that?” Han Li expressionlessly continued his questions. He wanted to understand these three natural disasters clearly, so that he would be better prepared if he happened to come across them.

The old man paused for a moment before continuing. He was truly shocked that the cultivator before him truly knew nothing about the circumstances of the sea or the most mysterious of the three greatest natural disasters, the ghost mist. Where was this cultivator from? Could it be that he came from a place of dry land? But this place was the Scattered Star Seas. Apart from the nearby sea territories, there were no large territories of land to speak of.

Restraining his bafflement, Wang Changqing continued to give Han Li an explanation, not daring to neglect him, “The Ghost Mist

is the most fearful and mysterious of the natural disasters of the Scattered Star Seas. It is a black mist that often drifts erratically across the sea. Any life trapped within that black mist will not escape from it. If mortals see it, their death is already decided. As for cultivators, they are no exception either; if cultivators see it, it will be far too late for them to escape as well. Although this mist is terrible, it only appears at certain locations. It never approaches the larger islands. So long as one takes precaution, it is possible to preserve one's life. As a result, this particular natural disaster has killed the fewest people despite being the most fearsome." The old man revealed some joy as he spoke.

Han Li sunk into thought after he heard this, 'What kind of cursed place is this? According to what was said, my plan of finding a small island with Spiritual Qi to cultivate in seclusion is worthless. Otherwise, I might run into the heavenly wind or ghost mist and meet a miserable end.'

Having seen that Han Li appeared displeased, the old man became apprehensive.

'Could it be that I've said something to offend the Great Immortal?'

While the old man was anxious, Han Li muttered to himself before asking, "That Master Gu from before, why does he want me to go to his residence on Stalwart Star Island? Also, where is this boat currently heading?"

Han Li stared at the old man with a face revealing neither joy nor anger.

The old man's heart thumped when he saw Han Li's indifferent expression and he couldn't help but hesitate.

How could Han Li not see that there was something wrong? He eased up his expression, saying, "Mister Wang, be at ease. I am only asking this to clearly understand the present circumstances. After all, I can't just casually agree to Master Gu's request without knowing anything. If I only have to help with a few minor errands, I wouldn't mind taking a trip to Stalwart Star Island."

Wang Chanqing knew that he could no longer stay silent; else, he would greatly offend this Immortal and be certain to face a bitter outcome. Thus, after a dry cough, he smiled and spoke while trembling, "This old man begs Immortal Master to not blame him. In truth, this matter wasn't meant to be concealed. It was just that Immortal Master hadn't asked."

Han Li sardonically rolled his eyes in his mind when he was given these evasive words. Still, the old man tactfully gave an immediate explanation of the situation.

Originally, this ship had just finished making a trip for business and was en route to return to Stalwart Star Island.

As for Master Gu, he was not born and raised on Stalwart Star Island, but from one of Stalwart Star Island's subsidiary islands instead. But after he became prosperous from business, he had recently decided to move to Stalwart Star Island.

The truly lucrative business involved traveling to large, far away islands, which only mortals of Stalwart Star Island were capable of doing. Mortals that were born on the main island and those born on subsidiary islands held differing statuses.

Master Gu's business was originally reselling goods among the subsidiary islands. Only after moving to the main island did he take his business a step further.

But after they arrived on the main island, Master Gu made an astonishing discovery. The business of long distance trading between the great islands wasn't something one could casually participate in. This business had been previously allocated to a set number of parties. Only ten clans on the island were able to participate in this extremely lucrative business.

In addition, these ten clans were not fixed and unchanging. They were decided in a magic battle that was held every three years.

If a clan wishes to step into this business, they must request an Immortal to undergo this competition. Only with their Immortal's victory in the challenge would they be able to acquire the permit to conduct trade between the great islands.

When Master Gu learned of this, he lost his head from panic.

Because he had previously only performed short distance trade, he had never hired any cultivators as there was no threat from demonic beasts. As a result, he knew pathetically few cultivators! He originally intended to wait until he had acquired a business and

slowly amassed the large sum required to hire one. But now, it was far too late.

He had received this information close to the date of the next three year magic battle. He couldn't possibly have the time to look for a cultivator to hire!

Although there were many cultivators at Stalwart Star Island, a majority of them were proud and arrogant. Only a pitiful few were willing to enter employment under a mortal and most of them would only lend their assistance if they had some relation beforehand.

As for the ten cultivators he was somewhat acquainted with, they found it embarrassing to participate in the challenge. Running short on time, Master Gu was unable to find any willing cultivators on Stalwart Star Island.

Without any better option, he took a trip to deliver goods back to the island he was born on, and he took advantage of that opportunity to ask for the assistance of a distant relative who had some relation to a cultivator. But he truly didn't expect that this particular cultivator had left on a distant journey.

Master Gu had been truly left dumbstruck.

But now, Han Li, a foreign cultivator, had entered his boat. Having finally found a cultivator despite his previous disconcerting failures had left Master Gu overjoyed. Although he didn't know the level of Han Li's cultivation, it was better than

being forced to give up and wait for another three years! Therefore, he had previously attempted to rope Han Li in at all costs and have Han Li fight on his behalf.

Having heard this, Han Li was left completely speechless.

When he heard that cultivators were hired by mortals to go to sea, he found this unbelievable. But now having heard that cultivators fought magic battles on behalf of mortals for the qualifications to do trade between large islands, Han Li was temporarily at a loss for words.

It seemed that although cultivators in this area were an aloof and remote crowd, they did not feel that it was beneath their dignity to work under mortals. Instead, it seemed that mortals and cultivators shared some sort of tangled relationship here.

However, he'd rather avoid participating in a magic battle for Master Gu's long distance trade qualifications. He was not so desperate for pay.

But he still felt somewhat uncertain. With a faint smile, he slowly asked, "Mister Wang, I am truly inexperienced. I still have something I must consult with you about."

"If there is anything Immortal Master does not understand, please ask! This old man will do his best to answer!" The old man respectfully replied with haste.

“I find myself at a loss. If one wanted to carry goods between islands, why would they have ordinary mortals ferry them across the sea? Are Immortals unwilling to use their storage pouch and other such magic tools? Isn’t flying both faster and safer?”

Chapter 367: Settling Down With A Guarantor

Wang Changqing bitterly smiled in response.

“Immortal Master jests! Although there are a few Immortals with storage pouches, they are incomparably precious. How could they lend them to us mortals and ferry our common items? Furthermore, every transaction between the large islands consist of great quantities. An Immortal’s storage pouch may be wondrous without comparison, but it can only hold so much. Even more so, Immortals wouldn’t do something so beneath their dignity as freighting goods!” Wang Changqing gave Han Li a careful explanation.

Han Li nodded his head without speaking and sunk into contemplation with narrowed eyes.

After a long while, Han Li indifferently said, “Master Gu wishes for me to act on his behalf, but I am powerless to do so. Because my cultivation isn’t high, me agreeing would only shame him. I request that Mister Wang report to Master Gu that he should find someone better qualified. As for the service of bringing me to Stalwart Star Island on his boat, I am able to offer a few spirit stones in remuneration.”

Han Li spoke slowly and clearly, but his voice was cold and detached.

When the old man heard Han Li’s rejection, his face paled

slightly.

He then pitifully pleaded, “Great Immortal, please assist my clan’s master! In order to pursue this business, Master Gu already paid a great price to the ship’s staff. Master Gu has also paid a great sum of spirit stones for the right to participate in the challenge. If he does not acquire the qualifications to trade between the great islands, the Gu Clan will surely go bankrupt. Us laborers will also lose our jobs and will have to find different opportunities.”

“My cultivation is truly inferior. Also, I do not wish to provoke any quarrels upon arriving at Stalwart Star Island!” Han Li expressionlessly shook his head in blunt refusal.

Seeing that Han Li’s refusal was certain and that his tone was strict, Wang Changqing didn’t dare to continue his pleading. He could only resolve his spirit and chat about the local customs with Han Li, telling him urgently needed knowledge.

An hour later, Han Li noticed that the old man’s mind was wandering. He sent him away to rest, telling him to come back when his mind was clearer.

Wang Changqing had felt tired for quite some time. Seeing that Han Li had shown him consideration, he didn’t decline and followed his suggestion.

After the old man left and respectfully closed the door, Han Li couldn’t help but sigh. Although he had some wealth on hand and even held some spiritual medicines that benefited mortals, he

didn't have the slightest intention of giving any to the old man. He couldn't possibly reveal his wealth in this unfamiliar land! Otherwise, he might provoke unnecessary trouble; even fatal disaster wasn't an unlikely possibility.

With that in mind, Han Li sat down cross-legged on the bed. He then swallowed a "Yellow Dragon Pill" and began refining his Qi.

He must restore his cultivation as soon as possible. After all, strength truly speaks loudest, regardless of what land one resided in.

After meditating for only a short moment, he heard faint footsteps from outside his room.

Although Han Li didn't open the door, he had released his spiritual sense outside earlier and could see everything that occurred. The old man called Wang Changqing had returned with Master Gu closely following behind him with an appearance of great worry.

Han Li wrinkled his brow. It seemed trouble had come for him. It was obvious that this Master Gu hadn't given up yet and came to bother him.

Were this the Heavenly South Region, Han Li could stop them in their tracks with an ice-cold shout, and they wouldn't dare to enter. But he was a new arrival in an unfamiliar land. He mustn't appear too unreasonable.

Without waiting for the two to knock on the door, he said with a mild tone, “Please come in! The door isn’t locked.”

Master Gu and Wang Changqing were shocked. But then they immediately realized that this Great Immortal had invited them in. They hastily tidied up their clothes before respectfully entering the room.

At this moment, Han Li had already gotten off the bed and was now standing with his hands behind his back.

“Great Immortal, Master Gu wishes to personally discuss this matter with you. Could Great Immortal please give Master Gu an opportunity?” Wang Changqing had previous contact with Han Li and knew that this Immortal wasn’t someone to be deceived. Thus, he directly stated his business for coming.

Han Li first glanced at the old man. Then he smiled and said indifferently, “Of course he can. But you should first advise Master Gu to not set his hopes too high!”

Wang Changqing revealed slight embarrassment, but he gave an honest explanation to the middle-aged man regardless.

The middle-aged man’s face blanked upon hearing this. But immediately after, the middle-aged man said something that first startled Wang Changqing before causing him to reveal a queer expression.

Han Li watched detachedly from the side and remained expressionless.

“Great Immortal, our Master Gu says that so long as you lend your assistance, the Gu Clan will bestow a large sum of spirit stones to you, regardless of whether this matter results in victory or defeat. If you truly manage to win the rights for the Gu Clan to perform trade between the great islands, Master Gu is willing to even become your guarantor, allowing a foreign cultivator such as yourself to become an official resident of Stalwart Star Island. Most of all, the Gu Clan is willing to respectfully offer three-tenths of the three year trading profits to you, even if you do not wish to take up an official position at Stalwart Star Island.

Once Wang Changqing said this, his gaze became dim as if he found Master Gu’s offer to be incredulous.

Han Li was somewhat surprised and stroked his chin. Baffled, he asked, “What? In order to live at Stalwart Star Island, one needs a guarantor? I never heard you say this!”

Although Han Li’s words were mild, Wang Changqing broke out in a cold sweat and hastily explained, “Immortal Master misunderstands! Foreign Immortals at Stalwart Star Island can be divided into two types. One type is there for a temporary stay. They are unable to hold office and generally live there for a few years, leaving or staying depending on their own preference. The other type have guarantors from the great nearby clans and are able to stay as long as they wish. Not only do they have to pay less spirit stones to stay on the island and have the ability to follow the formalities to obtain a permanent residence, but they also have the

qualifications to hold office and have the right to participate in the decennial Great Spirit Land Contest. Depending on one's performance in the contest, they are given land with a corresponding density of Spiritual Qi. This old man neglected to mention this to you because finding a guarantor for a foreign cultivator on an island as large as Stalwart Star Island is an exceedingly complicated matter." Fearing that Han Li would misunderstand, Wang Changqing explained this all in a single breath.

Han Li's expression became gloomy afterwards. Han Li doubtfully asked, "What happens to those cultivators who aren't able to find a residence on Stalwart Star Island? Are they unable to acquire a place to cultivate?"

The old man replied, "Of course not. Those Immortals from subsidiary islands are able to participate in the competitions. However, they can only participate in the main island's contest in order to obtain places of cultivation. As for why Stalwart Star Island is the main island, that is because the island has the best spirit veins and densest Spiritual Qi in the local sea. The other islands possess greatly inferior spirit veins in comparison."

With all this information, Han Li's expression incessantly switched between clear and gloomy.

These rules were an obvious tactic for the cultivators of the main island to ensure they held higher cultivation. All cultivators wanted a cultivation area that held great Spiritual Qi! Regardless of whether they were nurturing spiritual herbs or cultivating, it was always better to have a place with denser Spiritual Qi!

Han Li tightly tensed his brow and paced back and forth with a lowered head. He then raised his head and turned to look at the middle-aged man surnamed Gu who held an expectant expression.

Seeing that Master Gu held such a hopeful expression, Han Li sighed and slowly said, "Please inform me about the cultivation levels of the other cultivators that will be fighting. If I can handle them, I will make an exception and fight on your behalf!" Han Li revealed a helpless appearance.

Wang Changqing became overjoyed and hastily gave the middle-aged man a translation, causing him to become rapt with joy.

Afterwards, Han Li inwardly mused, 'If those cultivators aren't Foundation Establishment, by relying on my puppets and incisive magic tools, I should be able to win without a problem, even with my current meager cultivation. As such, I should still be able to cultivate the Three Essence Revolutions Technique. Naturally, I'll also want to cultivate that External Reincarnation technique and Great Development Technique. They should prove to be effective lifesaving measures.'

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Four days later, a large cheer echoed throughout the huge ship. They had finally reached Stalwart Star Island.

Han Li followed the lead of Master Gu and Wang Changqing as they excitedly handled the formalities on the island for Han Li.

After all, an unfamiliar cultivator to the island must be reported at the docks in order to avoid being mistaken for a malicious intruder.

As Han Li followed after the two, he silently sized up the entire port. He was left with the impression that it was truly grand! Regardless of the quantity or size of the ships, it was fundamentally incomparable to any of the small ports from the Heavenly South Region.

Unexpectedly, there were seven other remarkably huge ships similar to Master Gu's ship already moored at the port. Smaller ships naturally numbered many times more.

Although Han Li didn't count carefully, he estimated that about three hundred ships were docked at the harbor. As for the crowd of people bustling about the harbor and ships, it was far more than that.

This was the first time that Han Li saw what he thought to be an 'ocean of people'.

Chapter 368: Farmstead

But as Han Li was counting the number of mortals, he also felt the faint aura of several cultivators. It seemed these cultivators were in charge of maintaining order at the port.

As Han Li was thinking this, he and Crooked Soul were brought to a stone room inside the harbor.

The room was very simply decorated with only a wooden desk and a chair with a wrinkly old man sitting in it with his eyes shut.

Upon hearing Han Li and company enter, this Immortal opened his eyes.

A cold light suddenly shot out as his eyes opened. Han Li's heart shuddered upon seeing it. This person was unexpectedly a Foundation Establishment cultivator. In addition, his magic power was no less than Han Li when he had been at his peak.

This wrinkly, yellow-faced old man ignored Master Gu and Wang Changqing and directly swept his gaze toward Han Li and Crooked Soul. After seeing that Han Li was only a Qi Condensation cultivator, his expression became lazy once more. But after he took note of Han Li, he seemed to have glanced at Crooked Soul several more times.

“If you have business, be quick about it. Otherwise, don't interrupt my rest.” He spoke dispiritedly and displayed some impatience.

By relying on his highly retentive memory, Han Li had acquired a rough understanding of the local language from Wang Changqing. Although he couldn't speak it, he could understand the meaning of others with some difficulty.

But since he didn't have any experience interacting with the cultivators of this land, he didn't say a word and only smiled as Master Gu and Wang Changqing spoke with the cultivator.

Master Gu respectfully addressed him as Immortal Yang. Then he moved closer to him and whispered something before turning around and pointing at Han Li. It seemed he was explaining his origins. Afterwards, he placed a few spirit stones in his hand.

Grasping the spirit stones in his hand, Immortal Yang's expression greatly eased up. He then took out a green jade medallion and stiffly asked Han Li, "Your name?"

"Han Li!" Han Li was able to say his own name fluently. As for how the other party would write them, he didn't care in the least.

Immortal Yang's hand flashed with green light, enveloping the entire jade medallion. After a short moment, the radiance faded away, revealing two strange symbols that Han Li hadn't seen before.

The yellow-faced old man then tossed the jade medallion towards Han Li.

“Properly put away the medallion. If you lose it, you must immediately come back here and receive a replacement. Otherwise, you will face punishment as a trespasser on Stalwart Star Island. Naturally, if you settle down here later, you will no longer require the jade medallion and can return it. As for that refined corpse behind you, it obviously doesn’t need one.” After saying this with a raspy voice, he no longer paid them any attention and closed his eyes once more.

Master Gu tactfully left at once.

However, Han Li seemed interested in how he saw though Crooked Soul’s true identity with a single glance. After taking a good look at him, Han Li silently left the room.

Shortly after Han Li left, that Immortal Yang opened his eyes once more. He muttered to himself with slight bewilderment, “That refined corpse is truly odd. It is clearly a dead body, but it still releases Spiritual Qi! Could it be some sort of new corpse refinement technique?” The old man then sunk into a long period of contemplation.

After leaving the port, Master Gu hired a carriage being pulled by strange ox-like goats, quickly bringing them deeper into the island by traveling along a large road.

Along the way, there were countless similar vehicles going about their own business.

But once the carriage passed through several small, bustling towns, they saw far fewer carriages. As they traveled along a few small roads, pedestrians and carriages became exceedingly sparse.

After hurriedly travelling for half a day, the carriage finally arrived at a farmstead that occupied over two acres. The farmstead grew many odd crops that Han Li hadn't seen before.

There were crops that resembled grains and rice. However, their leaves were thick, flat and of a violet-red color. There were also crops that resembled cabbage. They released a faint scent, and although it possessed an extremely similar appearance to cabbage, there were no such cabbages that were as tall as half a man in the Heavenly South Region. There was even Choy Sum that bloomed small blue flowers...

More than ten farmers could be seen at each vegetable field. They were toiling at the fields in groups of two and three.

This provided quite a serene view of the farmstead!

As Han Li gazed at the farm with interest, the carriage had arrived at the large entrance of the farmstead's manor and stopped. Han Li brought Crooked Soul out with him and took a look around.

The manor was surrounded by green pine trees and neighbored a rather large hill. It appeared somewhat unusual, but could be considered to be quite tasteful with a serene environment. In addition, the manor was surrounded by earth walls six meters tall

and one meter thick. Many houses lied within the walls, appearing to have been built recently.

‘So this is the Gu Clan!’ Han Li silently uttered a word of praise. But as he carefully examined the pines, his expression inadvertently changed because of an astonishing discovery. The trees that surrounded the manor faintly revealed the aura of a formation spell. It was obvious that a restriction had been placed here.

Although Han Li didn’t view the formation spell to be exceptional by any means, it was still enough to trap a low level cultivator.

While Han Li was feeling somewhat suspicious, Master Gu got off the carriage and spoke with an apologetic smile, “Immortal Han, please take a rest at the manor! I’ll call for some subordinates to prepare some of the island’s specialty wine for the Immortal Master!”

Han Li took a random glance at the surroundings of the manor and replied with a smile, “Let it be. I don’t wish to disturb Master Gu’s home. It’ll be fine if I reside there for the time being. After our affairs have been handled, I will search for a more permanent residence.” Han Li then pointed in a direction off to the side.

Master Gu and Wang Changqing followed the direction Han Li was pointing to and saw that it was a small solitary hill. They couldn’t help but be dumbstruck.

But after seeing that their many enthusiastic invitations had failed, they could only allow this strange immortal to head towards the small hill. They gave each other a mutual glance of helplessness before walking into the manor.

Han Li brought Crooked Soul with him on the small, sloped path towards the hilltop. He then took a glance down at the Gu Clan Manor from above.

He saw that Master Gu was heading towards the huge residence at the center of the manor while being escorted by a crowd of women and men. By the time he had arrived there, most of them have dispersed. Only a few beautifully clothed individuals followed him into the manor.

Han Li smirked slightly and turned around, busying himself with his own affairs.

He first went to find a relatively flat and even piece of land at the back of the hill. Then he quickly uprooted several of the thicker pines and cut them into pieces with magic tools. Afterwards, he had Crooked Soul...

An hour later, he had completed a simple small wooden house on the hill. The house had a wooden table, wooden chairs, and even a wooden bed.

In the following month, Han Li stayed in his house everyday, taking medicinal pills and refining Qi, striving to restore his cultivation as soon as possible.

As for Master Gu and Wang Changqing, they visited several times during this period and discussed matters pertaining to the contest. Afterwards, they hurriedly left, not daring to further disturb Han Li's cultivation.

But as Master Gu was a sensible person, he sent delicacies up to Han Li's home every few days for his enjoyment. Han Li gladly accepted them without a trace of politeness.

Many kinds of exceptionally sweet fruits were among these offerings, much to Han Li's enjoyment. They were clearly the island's local specialties since he had never seen them before.

During the last few days of the month, Han Li had managed to restore his cultivation to the fifth layer of Qi Condensation. He found this very surprising and felt his heart become more assured.

According to Master Gu, none of the cultivators that the ten clans had requested possessed a high level of cultivation. Apart from a few exceptions, a majority of them only possessed a cultivation at the sixth or seventh layer of Qi Condensation. As for the lots which would decide the fights, so long as Han Li's luck wasn't exceptionally terrible, he wouldn't have a problem in the contest.

In addition, Master Gu had scoured the nearby seas for three 'impressive' magic tools to increase Han Li's odds of success.

Han Li barely classified these items as high grade magic tools. He could only roll his eyes inwardly and accept them so that Master

Gu would feel at ease.

Two days after Han Li restored the fifth layer of his cultivation, Master Gu and Wang Changqing paid Han Li a visit with nervous expressions. Han Li wordlessly entered their carriage drawn by strange beasts, and they hurriedly traveled to some area located at the center of the island.

Four hours later, they arrived at a city that seemed to be entirely constructed out of white stone.

As they entered the city, they saw a large amount of mortals guarding the city entrance.

They wouldn't bother anyone leaving the city, but entering the city would require one to show a command medallion, similar to the one Han Li possessed.

But when Han Li was about to enter the city, the guards took out a cylindrical object and shook it at Han Li several times. After it shined with a green light, they gave Han Li a respectful salute and moved to only inspect the medallions of Master Gu and Wang Changqing.

Chapter 369: Challenge (1)

Han Li sized up the soldiers. Although they didn't possess spiritual power fluctuations, they were full of vigour. It seemed they had trained in some shallow martial arts, but what caught his eye the most was the cylinder. There was actually such a wondrous item that could differentiate cultivators from mortals.

Han Li couldn't help but take another look at the cylinder.

Wang Changqing saw this and gave Han Li an explanation with a smile, "That is a spirit plate. It allows us mortals to identify who is an Immortal!"

"Spirit plate?" Han Li was somewhat surprised to hear this, but he immediately thought of the palm sized jade plate embedded in the cylinder and faintly nodded, not saying anything further.

Han Li then detachedly watched as the carriage traveled on the white stone street towards the center of the city.

There were countless pedestrians on the street, coming and going without stop or rest. The deeper they went into the city, the livelier it became.

A majority of the people wore white. Those that didn't wear white, wore a dull yellow, faint green and other such mild colors. There was no one wearing any bright colors.

In addition, those that didn't wear white were clearly of high status. These well dressed individuals would often have three or four shabbily dressed subordinates closely following after them.

Because there were far too many people and carriages on the street, their carriage was forced to slow down. After spending a long time traveling with such slow speed, their carriage finally arrived at a huge plaza in the city's center.

The plaza took up about five acres and was filled with a huge crowd. All Han Li could see was a vast sea of black-haired heads, hurriedly flowing in every direction without end.

Shops lined the plaza, each one fully packed with customers. At the very center, the shops seemed to be made up of temporary booths. They were abnormally overcrowded and were accompanied with fervent chatter. It appeared to be bustling with unusual amounts of activity.

Han Li estimated that with the density of the crowd, there were at least several tens of thousands of people in the plaza.

It was naturally impossible to further advance in the carriage through such a large crowd. Master Gu took the lead and descended from the carriage, bringing Han Li and company towards the palace-styled building at the side of the plaza.

The palace was over thirty meters tall, far taller than the other buildings around it. The huge gate of the palace was guarded by a line of soldiers with sparkling long spears in their grasp,

preventing anybody from casually approaching.

“This is the Stalwart Star Island’s first market day of the third month. That is why there are several times more people here at East Stone City. Basically, the residences from many cities and towns on the eastern part of the island all come here to trade for rarities that would normally be hard to obtain.” As Master Gu was leading the way toward the palace, he turned his head and gave Han Li an explanation with a faint smile.

Master Gu stepped forward and spoke with the gate guards. A guard then waved his hand, signifying that they could pass.

Master Gu hastily called out to Han Li and Wang Changqing before heading in.

Once they passed through the gate, it became much more shaded and quiet. In the corridor past the gate, there were several tens of individuals of seemingly high status having whispered conversations in groups of three. When they saw Master Gu arrive, they seemed to look at him with hostility.

But at this moment, the purple gate at the other end of the corridor opened, revealing a white clothed youth of about twenty years old. His appearance was delicate and refined, much like that of a frail scholar.

The youth gave Han Li a friendly glance before speaking courteously to Master Gu, “Are you Mister Gu? The others have already arrived. Cultivators that are participating in the challenge

must go further in. As for you, Mister Gu, please wait outside.”

From a single glance, Han Li was undoubtedly sure that the youth’s cultivation was about the same as his current cultivation, the fifth layer of Qi Condensation.

Master Gu could only give Han Li an expectant look before stepping off to the side.

Han Li followed the youth through the gate. Afterwards, the gate immediately shut.

“My surname is Wen but Fellow Daoist can call me Wen Qiang. You seem quite unfamiliar. Could it be that you’re new to our Stalwart Star Island?”

“I am Han Li. I’ve just arrived here last month!” Having a month of practice, Han Li was able to speak the local language without problem.

“Hehe, how admirable! Daring to journey from your homeland with your current cultivation, Daoist Friend’s courage and insight must be outstanding! I wouldn’t have been able to do it. I’ve never taken a single step off this island since birth.” The youth spoke with admiration.

Han Li faintly smiled but didn’t say anything in response.

Han Li followed the youth, eventually arriving at a round hall.

There were over thirty cultivators there, sitting and standing, each wearing various expressions.

A shriveled old man sitting across from the crowd of cultivators spoke quickly, “It seems that everyone has gathered. Let’s start drawing lots! Each fight will be decided in one round. Killing is forbidden and will result in disqualification.”

He was the only Foundation Establishment cultivator among a room of Qi Condensation cultivators. It seemed he was the cultivator in charge.

Once the youth surnamed Wen entered the hall, he hurriedly went to stand beside the old man and await his orders.

The old man didn’t pay the youth any attention. Instead, he took out an azure jade cylinder with over twenty bamboo sticks.

“To participate in the challenge, draw a lot. Once the number of challengers matches the number of the representatives of the incumbent merchants, the remaining challengers will be qualified to challenge them.”

The majority of the crowd stared at the jade cylinder as it was enveloped in a layer of azure light, concealing the sticks within. Naturally, the light repelled spiritual sense, and upon doing so, the owners of the spiritual sense seemed to have suffered and couldn’t help but sway.

Those that didn't use their spiritual sense to probe the cylinder revealed schadenfreude. These cultivators naturally wished for Han Li and the other challengers to suffer a disadvantage.

As for Han Li, who possessed powerful spiritual sense, he would have no problem forcefully breaking through the azure light. However, this would be far too eye-catching. As such, Han Li could only helplessly look at the others in dismay and take his turn drawing lots.

When Han Li went up to draw his lot, he was unexpectedly able to see through the azure light, but all he saw was strange silver characters. He wrinkled his brow in response. He had completely forgotten that he still couldn't read the local writing!

But still, Han Li expressionlessly drew a lot as if nothing had happened.

"Number one!" The old man coldly shouted. The two cultivators that drew that lot immediately walked forward.

The old man bluntly said, "You two will compete on the stage over there. There is a formation setup, so there is no need to fear destruction from magic techniques. It will be your victory if you are able to take away their lot. So long as you don't kill your opponent, I don't care what methods or tricks you use."

"Yes, Senior!" The two participants bowed to the old man before walking towards the elevated platform at the back of the hall. The platform then flashed with white light and the two disappeared

without a trace.

Shortly after, the two reappeared on the platform, revealing slight fatigue. One of them animatedly gave the old man two bamboo sticks. The other dejectedly walked out from the hall.

“Number two!” The old man coldly shouted.

Because the battles of Qi Condensation cultivators were simple, victory was decided extremely quickly. Battles ended almost as soon as they began. But Han Li was baffled to see that regardless of whether they won or lost, they were exceptionally happy.

“Number seven!” A cultivator walked out as soon as the old man yelled, but his opponent hadn’t revealed himself.

“Number seven!” The old man yelled again with a gloomy expression.

Han Li suddenly walked out and hastily apologized, “Senior! I apologize! I had misread my number. I thought it said nine!”

The old man didn’t pay any mind to what Han Li said and impatiently waved his hand. Han Li then tactfully went up to the platform with his opponent.

After a flash of white light, Han Li and his opponent appeared in a world of white mist. The area spanned about a hundred meters and was covered by the white mist in every direction.

The middle-aged cultivator spoke to Han Li with confidence, “Your cultivation is lower than mine by two whole layers. There is no need to fight. Fellow Daoist should forfeit. Else, I might accidentally give you a heavy injury!”

Seeing that this “expert” was only a seventh layer Qi Condensation cultivator and hadn’t released a protective barrier like he had, Han Li faintly smiled.

Chapter 370: Challenge (2)

“What’s so funny? I only wished to not injure you out of kindness!” When this cultivator saw that Han Li didn’t seem to care, he couldn’t help but become angry and increasingly flaunt his status as a ‘superior’.

Han Li tapped the floor with the tip of his foot, indifferently saying, “It’s nothing! I only feel that this competition is going to be easier than I had imagined.”

“What? You dare to look down on me?!” The middle aged cultivator’s face completely reddened. He raised his hand and revealed many glistening items. But before he could act, he suddenly saw the person in front of him blur. His vision then blackened, and he fell to the floor not knowing what had happened.

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A short moment later, Han Li carried the unconscious middle-aged man off the stage with an indifferent expression.

When the other cultivators saw this, they were stunned.

There was a clear difference in their cultivation, but the victor was Han Li. This was far beyond their expectations.

Even the old man, who had appeared moody from the very

beginning, revealed an odd expression.

He took a deep look at Han Li. Although he didn't say anything, he seemed to know how Han Li had taken action.

Han Li chuckled and calmly handed the two bamboo sticks to the old man. He then dropped his unconscious opponent to the floor and went over to the group of victorious cultivators.

The old man saw that the middle-aged cultivator was still unconscious and lightly shook his head, revealing a mysterious smile.

“Number eight!”

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When the final victor was decided, the old man looked at the ten cultivators that hadn't gone on the platform and lightly coughed. He then spoke with an indifferent tone, “We will now start the challenges in order of number. If you feel that your magic power is severely exhausted, you may take a moment to rest before facing your next challenge. However, these challenges must finish by today; it will count as a forfeit otherwise. Also, challengers are forbidden from challenging those who have already fought. As for the extra eleventh challenger, they will be allowed to challenge any one of the winning incumbents after the ten winners have been decided.”

“Now, let’s start!”

The first challenger selected the incumbent with the lowest cultivation and entered the stage with him.

As his opponent’s cultivation was only of the sixth layer and his cultivation was of the seventh, it appeared that he had high odds of winning.

But after the time it took to make a cup of tea, the sixth layer cultivator left the stage first. As for the first challenger, he reappeared in a miserable state.

He was ashamed and quickly left the hall without a word.

The remaining challengers revealed changed expressions. As for the victor, he returned to the other ten without the slightest of care.

“Next!” The old man shouted. He didn’t reveal the slightest surprise as if he had expected that cultivator to win!

“Senior, my magic power is deficient. I wish to rest for a moment!” The second chosen cultivator spoke with a slight blush.

“Number three!” The old man didn’t care whether his magic power truly hadn’t recovered and shouted the next number.

The following cultivator lightly creased his brow and also avoided the next fight.

As for the fourth challenger, he appeared to be unwilling to lose face and summoned the courage to choose an opponent, entering the stage.

In the end, the same result occurred. The fourth challenger was heavily injured, causing the remaining challengers to all be shaken.

Having seen this, the following two challengers took the opportunity to delay their fights. They thought that they would be able to make a better choice after seeing how it ended up for the others.

The old man's face stirred for a moment, before slowly calling out Han Li's number, "Number Seven!"

Han Li silently walked forward and pointed to an opponent with a sixth layer cultivation.

The opponent was a burly man. Having seen Han Li fearlessly select him, he suddenly revealed a malicious smile and walked toward the stage in large strides.

In contrast, Han Li walked forward with slow steps as if he was deliberating about the coming match.

Soon, Han Li and the burly man disappeared into the white light. Everyone looked in the direction of the stage with interest.

The old man then closed his eyes as if he had extended his spiritual sense.

But after a short moment, his cheeks slightly moved. He then opened his eyes and revealed a trace of astonishment.

With a flash of white light, a person appeared on the platform.

The many cultivators hurriedly turned their gaze. The light faded away to reveal Han Li. He didn't have the slightest injury, but he was dragging his opponent who had his entire body scorched. He leisurely walked off the platform as if he hadn't spent the slightest effort.

Not only were the challengers stupefied, even the incumbent opponents also had looks of disbelief on their faces.

As for Wen Qiang who stood behind the old man, his mouth was gaping. He didn't close it until some time later.

Han Li dragged his still-breathing opponent towards the old man and left him there, before returning to his original position with a leisurely stride.

When the other challengers saw this, they couldn't help but turn their gaze and reveal a trace of reverence.

Han Li coldly smiled in his heart.

It seemed that regardless of where he went, strength was the most effective method of speech.

Perhaps it was because Han Li's unexpected triumph inspired confidence in the remaining challengers, the following challengers didn't avoid their fight and immediately chose an opponent.

However, this only resulted in defeat and heavy injuries.

The challengers who had delayed their fights were appalled. With their competitive spirits completely extinguished, each one of them had eventually decided to forfeit.

After all, they knew that they were no match. Only an idiot would decide to fight regardless!

As such, the old man declared that only Han Li, on behalf of the Gu Clan, had acquired the qualifications for main island trade.

Afterwards, the old man handed a blue jade slip to Han Li and told him it would be settled once he gave that to the Gu Clan.

The old man then unceremoniously dismissed the cultivators, chasing them out of the hall with his voice.

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Han Li handed the blue jade slip to Master Gu in the corridor.

His expressions were quite marvelous. He appeared incredulous, astonished, and finally ecstatic with joy.

“Immortal Han, I am grateful beyond words. Please feel at ease, the Gu Clan will definitely fulfill their promise with you.”

By the time he said these words, Han Li, Master Gu, and Wang Changqing were already sitting in the carriage and were on their way back to the Gu Clan Estate.

As he was speaking these grateful words, his hands were tightly grasping the jade slip as if he was afraid that it would fly away. It made for quite a funny scene.

Leaning against the back of the carriage, Han Li said with a slight smile, “I believe Mister Gu isn’t someone who would abandon their benefactor upon achieving their goals, especially when the benefactor in question is a cultivator.”

With the warning laced in Han Li’s words, Master Gu and Wang Changqing paled and repeatedly said that they didn’t dare.

Not long after that, Han Li returned to his wooden house on the hill. Crooked Soul was still obediently on guard.

Han Li only managed to refine Qi for three days before Wang Changqing went to find him.

He had come to inform Han Li that Han Li could now go the Immortal Mountain's Immortal Records Pavilion and acquire permanent residence at Stalwart Star Island. They would also provide him with a cultivation area.

After all, the cultivators of the island all had their own Immortal's cave.

Since he hadn't participated in the Great Spirit Land Contest, his area was certain to have thinner Spiritual Qi, but it would still have enough to be considered an area of cultivation.

Han Li pocketed the guarantor's document that the Gu Clan had given him and flew towards the center of Stalwart Star Island. Crooked Soul was naturally left behind to guard his small house.

On his way, Han Li flew past seven cities and several tens of small towns before finally catching view of the Immortal Mountain that Wang Changqing had mentioned.

It was a huge, azure, tri-peaked mountain that penetrated through the clouds. The sight was truly majestic and beyond lofty.

Innumerable smaller peaks surrounded the huge mountain.

Han Li was unable to tell how expansive the mountain was from a glance.

He blankly stared at this “Immortal Mountain” while lost in thought.

“Hm? Aren’t you Fellow Daoist Han?” Han Li suddenly heard someone call out to him from behind.

Han Li was slightly alarmed and hastily turned around. The voice sounded familiar.

Not far behind him, the gentle and frail Wen Qiang was looking at him with a smile, flying on his wheel magic tool.

After staring blankly for a moment, Han Li responded with a chuckle, “So it was Fellow Daoist Wen! What a coincidence!”

“Hehe! I didn’t expect to see you! Fellow Daoist Han was actually able to defeat a cultivator from the protector squad. I really admire you!”

“Protector squad?” Han Li was startled to hear this!

Chapter 371: Immortal Records Pavilion

“Fellow Daoist Han, the ten cultivators to be challenged were hired at great expense by the great clans from the island’s protector squad. Although their cultivation isn’t high, their experience and techniques are superior to that of common cultivators as they have fought demonic beasts at sea and sparred with the cultivators from other islands. Not to mention opponents at the same layer, it wouldn’t be odd for them to defeat common cultivators with a cultivation of three layers above them.” Wen Qiang clicked his tongue with an expression of praise.

Han Li smiled and spoke modestly, “It was nothing. I was merely lucky.” Han Li had quite a bit of experience with regards to battle.

The youth looked in the direction of the azure mountain before turning his head around and asking with a smile, “Ah, yes. Fellow Daoist Han came here to handle some formalities at the Immortal Records Pavilion?”

As this wasn’t a matter worth concealing, Han Li calmly answered, “Fellow Daoist Wen guessed correctly. I wish to handle the formalities for settling down on this island and choose a cultivator’s residence.”

Having heard Han Li’s destination, Wen Qiang immediately offered a suggestion, “Hehe! I’ve been to the Immortal Ascension Pavilion several times already. How about I bring Fellow Daoist Han there along the way? It would be hard to look for it alone, considering the size of the Azurecloud Mountains.”

Han Li was slightly surprised to see him act so enthusiastically, but he still expressed his thanks and agreed.

As such, the two flew side by side towards the large mountain.

While the youth was leading the way, he gave Han Li a garrulous explanation of the mountain range, “On our island’s Azurecloud Mountains, in addition to the three great peaks: the Heavenly Pillar, the Heavenly Night, and the Heavenly Gate, there are also three hundred sixty seven smaller mountain peaks. The amount of caves among these mountains are countless, and it is said that many of them are capable of being a cultivation area.”

“Naturally, although the majority of the Azurecloud Mountains have large spirit veins, the density of Spiritual Qi varies. It is generally said that the taller the mountain’s peak, the denser the Spiritual Qi. As for the thirty-six mountain peaks with the densest Spiritual Qi, they are the prizes of the island’s decennial Great Spirit Land Contest. Those who feel that their cultivation is greater than the lords of these thirty-six mountain peaks may challenge them at will. The victor shall become the master of the peak. The differences between the peaks aren’t very significant. It is said that as long as a cultivator managed to enter Foundation Establishment, they would be able to acquire one of these mountain peaks as a cultivation area. As for Qi Condensation cultivators, they can only obediently find a valley or cave to use as a cultivation area.”

“Foundation Establishment cultivators are able to claim an entire mountain peak for themselves?” Han Li was greatly surprised.

The youth said with a self-mocking tone, “That’s right. However, the Foundation Establishment cultivators of the island have already occupied most of them. Us Qi Condensation cultivators shouldn’t think of such hopeful matters.”

“Oh!” Thoughts churned through Han Li’s mind, causing him to grow somewhat excited.

Han Li suddenly thought of something and casually asked, “Ah, then the three tallest mountains should have the greatest Spiritual Qi, yes?”

“Of course. The tallest peak, the Heavenly Pillar, is the cultivation area of our island’s master, Master Mu Long. It is forbidden from entry. It is said that our island’s lord is at mid Core Formation stage, and his divine abilities are devastating. As for the Heavenly Gate and the Heavenly Night mountain peaks, they are respectively occupied by Master Yuan Jun and Master Kan Qin. Although the Spiritual Qi is somewhat lacking in comparison to the Heavenly Pillar, it is still several times denser than in other areas.” Wen Qiang stated with a somewhat envious expression.

Han Li slowly asked with raised eyebrows, “Fellow Daoist Wen, are those two Core Formation Seniors as well?”

Wen Qiang nodded with a pleased expression, “Not only are they early Core Formation cultivators, they are also Dao companions.”

Han Li unconsciously frowned. Stalwart Star Island unexpectedly had three Core Formation cultivators. This was truly beyond his

expectations.

While Han Li was lost in thought, he arrived at the center of the Azurecloud mountains with Wen Qiang.

They occasionally ran into other cultivators on the way there, but after giving the two of them an indifferent glance, they all flew away, minding their own business.

A few minutes later, Han Li and Wen Qiang finally arrived at a relatively tall mountain peak.

The peak had a small, two-story pavilion of unknown age. Not only was its exterior thoroughly worn out and of an outdated design, it also hung a sign on its gate that was missing a corner. The words “Immortal Records Pavilion” were crookedly written on the sign.

Han Li blankly stared. Although he saw the sign, Han Li could not bring himself to believe it. He couldn’t help but turn towards Wen Qiang and ask, “This is...”

“Although I don’t want to admit it, this really is the Immortal Records Pavilion.” The youth spread out his arms with an appearance of helplessness.

The youth waved his hand and gave Han Li a warning just before he took his leave, “Alright, I’m going to leave now. However, Fellow Daoist Han should take note that the senior in charge of the

Immortal Records Pavilion has a strange temperament!”

Han Li indifferently gazed at the youth as he disappeared. After mindlessly shaking his head, he landed in front of the pavilion and walked in with a calm face.

Just as he approached the gate, he heard a somewhat gloomy voice, “Come in! The gate isn’t locked.” Han Li was shocked by the sudden announcement, but he couldn’t help but walk toward the pavilion hesitantly.

After entering the pavilion, Han Li was left stupefied.

The interior sharply contrasted with the outer appearance of the pavilion. It was magnificently decorated. The floor was covered in sparkling fire-red silk, and the walls were made of gold and jade while countless amounts of sparkling gems glittered on the ceiling. Corners of the building were decorated with many species of gorgeous plants that Han Li had never seen before.

There was also an odd stone bed across from him, sparkling with a strange blue light. Although he didn’t recognize what it was made out of, they were certain to be some sort of precious materials.

A haggard, middle-aged man was currently reclining on it. His clothes were made of dazzling, fire-red demon fur. He was embracing a huge, white pearl as he indifferently glanced at Han Li.

Han Li suppressed his amazement and bowed. He then asked with a respectful tone, “Hello Senior. This one wishes to handle the formalities for taking up residence. May I ask if Senior is in charge of this matter?”

The middle-aged man lightly sighed before spiritedly asking, “Taking up residence? Do you have a guarantor?”

“I do!” Han Li immediately took out the document that the Gu Clan member had given him and stepped forward to give it to the man. Han Li didn’t dare to belittle him as his spiritual power fluctuations clearly revealed his status as a powerful late Foundation Establishment cultivator.

The middle-aged man took the signed document from Han Li and swept through it. His eyes then flashed with bright light, sizing Han Li up.

Caressing the pearl in his embrace, the middle-aged man indifferently asked, “I have heard that there was a new cultivator on the island that was able to defeat a member of the protector squad while at the fifth layer of Qi Condensation. Could that have been you?”

Han Li was somewhat surprised, but he hastily replied with a modest tone, “Junior only won through a fluke! It wasn’t really like that!”

“Humph! A fluke...” The middle-aged man snorted with a cold smile.

Han Li inwardly frowned and felt puzzled, ‘The battle only took place several days ago. How does this person know about it?’

The middle-aged man tightened the demon furs on his body as if he saw the confusion in Han Li’s mind and calmly said, “That person you defeated from the protector squad is my unbecoming disciple! Having lost to someone with a lower cultivation than himself, I’ve sentenced him to secluded study as punishment.”

Han Li bitterly smiled after being stunned for moment as this was far too coincidental! Han Li became somewhat worried. Could it be that he intended to teach Han Li a lesson on behalf of his disciple?

The middle-aged man squinted at Han Li and spoke with an icy tone, “Don’t worry. This is a matter between you juniors, and I won’t take advantage of you as your senior. I hope that you will fight my unbecoming disciple one more time. After that, I won’t pursue the matter any further, regardless of the outcome.”

Han Li felt his heart relax. “Since it is Senior’s request, Junior naturally will not refuse!”

The middle-aged man was surprised to see Han Li so willingly consent, but soon after, he revealed a satisfied expression.

The middle-aged man’s hand flashed with white light and the pearl disappeared. He then stood up and slowly said, “Next, I will be handling the matters of your residency.”

The formalities for residency were actually quite simple. The middle-aged man merely took out a golden book and wrote Han Li's name in it. Han Li also exchanged the green jade medallion he had received from the harbor for a blue jade pendant.

The jade pendant twinkled with blue light and was a low grade magic tool. According to the middle-aged man, the pendant possessed minor waterproofing effects. The effect was quite practical.

Next, the middle-aged man tossed a silver booklet towards Han Li.

"All of the places shining with golden light have already been taken. The white ones are unoccupied. Choose one to be your cultivation area! Cough, cough..." After quickly speaking just a few words, he started to cough without end. The middle-aged man seemed to be afflicted with a truly serious illness.

Chapter 372: Minor Expanse Island

Han Li slowly unfolded the booklet before discovering that it was a complete map of Stalwart Star Island. Gold and white light intertwined on the map and flickered with a mysterious radiance.

The areas that were sparkling were concentrated at the center of the island, the Azurecloud mountain range.

Han Li discovered that the Azurecloud Mountains were even more expansive than he had imagined. They occupied an entire fourth of the island's area.

As Han Li carefully examined the sparkling areas of white light, he couldn't help but squint his eyes.

There were half as many of the gold lights as white lights. However, the white lights were of varying brightness; some were blinding, while others were dull.

The mountain peaks that were marked with blinding light weren't even considered by Han Li as the middle-aged man had already explained, "Qi Condensation cultivators don't have the qualifications to choose the mountain peaks. As for the other areas, they don't have those restrictions, so long as they are an area marked by white light.

This was exactly the same as Wen Qiang had told him, but there were only valleys and caves left to choose from, and these all possessed dim white lights.

After looking at the map for a moment, he raised his head and asked the middle-aged man with a serious tone, “Junior wishes to ask a question. Are there any restrictions on how large an area I can use to establish my Immortal’s cave?”

The middle-aged man was somewhat surprised but soon replied with a mocking tone, “You may set up any formation spells and restrictions you choose within a radius of five kilometers, so long as you have the room for it that is.”

Han Li calmly said, “Then can Junior pick this place? Since this place is also marked by a white light, shouldn’t there be a spirit vein there?” He lightly tapped a certain spot on the map, causing a white light to flash to yellow. Han Li then handed the picture book back to the middle-aged man.

“There!?” The middle-aged man’s pale face revealed surprise upon seeing where Han Li had pointed.

The place was an area outside of Stalwart Star Island. It had previously been flashing with a weak white light.

“That is Minor Expanse Island. The island is only about thirty-five kilometers long, but it does have a small spirit vein that is a few kilometers long. We laid down a small defensive formation spell and established a small village on the island, a few hundred people currently live there.” The middle-aged man spoke with a mysterious smile that revealed hints of mockery.

Han Li remained silent. He knew that since the middle-aged man wore such an expression, this island was certain to have its complications.

“This small island is of little interest to Stalwart Star Island. We only held onto it because it would be a shame to abandon the spirit vein. It’s Spiritual Qi density is greatly inferior to that of other islands, and its area is small. It’s true that other cultivators won’t bother you if you choose that area, but its Spiritual Qi density is only two-thirds of that found in the Azurecloud Mountains. As such, your cultivation speed would be quite a bit slower than the cultivators staying on this island.

“There were previously other cultivators like yourself that loved to bitterly cultivate in isolation. However, those cultivators would inevitably return after only a few years. They would rather spend a large amount of spirit stones to choose a new cultivation area than to continue staying on that island. After all, Spiritual Qi density is the most important factor to cultivators. Furthermore, those who select this island must also undertake the responsibility of protecting it. You would be the one to pay for the spirit stone expenditure of the island’s defensive formation spells.

“Naturally, you would receive a certain amount of spirit stones as compensation from the residents of the island, and you won’t have to pay tribute to the Island’s master. But I must warn you that the spirit stones you receive in compensation won’t be enough to sustain the daily usage of the defensive formation. The island’s spirit stone consumption has been sustained up until now by Stalwart Star Island.” The middle-aged cultivator lazily pointed out the rule while tapping the bedside.

After muttering to himself for a moment, Han Li eventually asked in a soft voice, “If I choose that small island, doesn’t that mean I would in fact become the island’s master?”

“Hehe, you could think of it that way.” The middle-aged man replied with some surprise. He had already laid out the island’s shortcomings. If this youth still wanted to choose that island, it was none of his business.

The middle-aged man thoughtfully sized up Han Li once more and inwardly sneered. He would spend a huge amount of spirit stones before long, and come to complain without end!

He was convinced that within two years at most, this young cultivator would come back with gray hair and a haggard complexion to choose a new cultivation area. Why else would such a position, being the master of a small island, remain uncontested until now?

After some more thought, Han Li spoke without further hesitation, “Alright, this Junior will pick the Minor Expanse Island!”

Having heard that Han Li was certain, the middle-aged cultivator didn’t hesitate. He took out a golden brush and lightly dabbed the island on the map. The island’s white light immediately turned golden.

He then searched his robes for a jade slip which he then wrote a few characters on with his golden brush before tossing it to Han Li.

Han Li lowered his head to look at the jade slip and saw that there were two golden characters on it. They seemed familiar, as if it were his name written in the local characters.

“This jade slip is evidence that Minor Expanse Island is your cultivation area and contains the names of the island’s inhabitants. Make sure to hold onto it properly!” The middle-aged man indifferently said.

Afterwards, he put away the booklet and laid back down on the stone bed. He then waved his arm at Han Li, obviously shoos him away.

Han Li gave him a quick salute before tactfully leaving.

Exiting the Immortal Records Pavilion, Han Li had no inclination to sightsee around the Azurecloud Mountains or meet other cultivators. Instead, he directly flew back to the Gu Clan Estate.

On the morning of the next day, Han Li left a letter for Master Gu on the desk in his room. Then he brought Crooked Soul with him to the closest village and bought a map of Stalwart Star Island and its nearby territories before heading straight towards the harbor.

Wang Changqing had told Han Li previously that the island’s largest city “Stalwart Star City” was located in the western part of Stalwart Star Island. That city had a street called “Allsky Street” where cultivators traded items.

Although Han Li wished to go there and see what the cultivators overseas possessed and learn their cultivation arts, his current cultivation was pathetically weak. As such, he was fearful to go to an area with many cultivators, and reluctantly dropped the idea.

As Han Li flew to the harbor, he muttered to himself with ridicule, 'With my strength lacking, my courage suffers as well.'

He didn't choose a cultivation area at the Azurecloud Mountains, favoring the vacant Minor Expanse Island where the Spiritual Qi was thinner. This decision was so that he wouldn't have to go through great pains to conceal the secret of his small bottle. Only at an isolated island far away from other cultivators would he be able to to freely cultivate the spiritual medicines required to massively increase his cultivation without attracting any unwanted attention.

Although his cultivation speed would somewhat suffer as a result, the Spiritual Qi would still be enough to cultivate spiritual herbs. After all, he mainly relied on consuming refined spiritual medicines for his cultivation. Having thinner Spiritual Qi wouldn't influence him too greatly.

Han Li flew out of Stalwart Star Island's huge island-wide restriction from the port. Following the map, he headed straight towards Minor Expanse Island.

On the map, the island was located right beside Stalwart Star Island. But only after flying for an entire day on his Divine Wind

Boat was he able to spot it.

After flying once around the island, Han Li found the entrance to the island's formation spell, a small dock. Han Li then slowly descended towards it.

There were very few people on the dock, with only about a dozen fishermen sitting on small boats beside the port. Once they saw Han Li and Crooked Soul descend from the sky, they got off their boats and gathered together to see Han Li.

The crowd walked towards Han Li and saluted him one by one. A particularly burly man with a dark face separated himself from the crowd and paid his respects to Han Li. It seemed this person was the head fisherman, "This humble one is Hei Gui. He pays his respects to Immortal Master!"

"Is this Minor Expanse Island?" Although Han Li felt that he wasn't mistaken, it was best to be prudent.

Hei Gui asked with a puzzled expression, "Yes it is, Great Immortal! Has Immortal Master come to replace the spirit stones already? It hasn't been that long since they were last changed!"

Having heard that this really was Minor Expanse Island, Han Li let out a breath of relief. With a faint smile, he spoke to those present, "I didn't come to replace the spirit stones. From now on, I will be the one providing the spirit stones for the island as this small island has become my cultivation area. You may all call me Immortal Han!"

Under the astonished gazes of the fishermen, Han Li called out to Crooked Soul, and they flew towards the center of the island.

Chapter 373: External Reincarnation

The sole village on this small island was at the east end, near its port. In the west was a small mountain range of about ten kilometers with only two small mountains. The higher mountain was about a kilometer tall, while the shorter one was only about four hundred meters tall.

Han Li gazed at the mountains from afar before suppressing the excitement in his heart, deciding to pay a visit to the village first.

Han Li's and Crooked Soul's arrival caused quite a stir. An old man, the self-proclaimed village head, immediately stepped forward to see Han Li.

After letting the old man inspect the gold symbols on the jade slip, the village head immediately declared that the entire village must obey the Great Immortal's orders.

Naturally, Han Li didn't have any use for the assistance of mortals. Instead, he asked about the issues he was most concerned with: the general circumstances of the island and the amount of spirit stones the villagers were able to contribute towards maintaining the island's protective formation.

After hearing that the amount added up to almost nothing, Han Li became somewhat gloomy.

Didn't this mean that he had to contribute all of the spirit stones?

That middle-aged man said the residents would be contributing a portion of spirit stones consumed by the protective formation. It seemed like those were merely pleasant words. Their help wouldn't amount to anything.

Han Li inwardly cursed at the middle-aged cultivator, but spoke a few reassuring words to the old man. He estimated the amount of spirit stones required and compared it to the old man's estimate of their contribution. Han Li then gave the old man a year's worth of spirit stones to sustain the formation spell.

He then told the old man that, in the coming years, he could go to his Immortal's cave and pick up the spirit stones required for that year. Then, without paying attention to the old man's repeated thanks, Han Li and Crooked Soul flew towards the island's west side.

Once Han Li entered the mountain range known by the island's inhabitants as the "Minor Expanse Mountains", he waswhelmed by the feeling of faint Spiritual Qi, causing his heart to stir.

A short moment later, Han Li was standing at the front of his Divine Wind Boat as he circled both mountain peaks.

It was obvious that the Spiritual Qi was richer on the higher mountain peak, but the lower mountain peak was thicker and more solid. Not only was it more suitable for an Immortal's cave, it was also the site of a previous cultivator's Immortal's cave. The present Immortal's cave was intact and undamaged; it seemed suitable for immediate occupation.

Han Li sunk into thought for a moment on his Divine Wind Boat. His eyes then flashed with spirited light, and he came to a decision.

He first flew towards the thicker, shorter mountain peak and entered the deepest, most secretive area of the Immortal's cave. Afterwards, he fiercely struck the ground with his magic tools.

Half a day later, the initial makings of an underground passage had been created. It had a nine meter diameter and headed straight towards the base of the mountain.

But when Han Li's passage had reached a dozen meters below the mountain's base, he suddenly changed direction towards the base of the other mountain over a kilometer away.

Although Han Li's magic tool was incomparably sharp, having Crooked Soul's assistance shortened the time required for this massive undertaking to two days.

After carving out a passage between the bases of the mountains, Han Li carved out a new Immortal's cave inside of the taller mountain in the style of his old Immortal's cave in the Heavenly South Region. This new Immortal's cave was cut in exactly the same shape as his old one in the Tai Yue Mountain Range, but this time, there was no exit except for the underground tunnel.

This would be the place where Han Li would cultivate and grow spiritual herbs. Having the original cave dwelling as a cover for the true one, Han Li felt much safer.

After finishing up with his Immortal's cave, Han Li then set up the first Five Elements Reversal Formation at the entrance of the shorter, thicker mountain.

But after Han Li flew around the two mountains for a while, he still felt uneasy.

He took out the sets of formation setup tools that Xin Ruyin had given him and chose to deploy two of the more impressive formation, the "The Fierce Heavenly Wind Formation" and the "Illusory Heavensifting Formation".

These two formation spells had a wide range and would cover both of the mountains entirely. Although they weren't as wondrous as the "Five Elements Reversal Formation", they would still prove to be quite troublesome for Foundation Establishment cultivators. As such, Han Li's cave dwelling would be entirely safe from everything below the level of Core Formation cultivators.

Looking from the sky outside of the formation, the mountains were enshrouded in a misty fog and were hard to make out. Han Li faintly smiled at the sight and slowly descended into the mist, disappearing from sight.

After entering the true Immortal's cave, Han Li continually busied himself instead of taking the chance to rest.

First, he established a secretive medicinal garden with a few spiritual herbs. After all, if he wished to mature them, they must

first become young sprouts.

Then, Han Li gazed at the bottle as if it were as precious as his own life before burying it in the corner of the garden and covering it with the concealing magic treasure fragment he had bought so long ago. He also made a hidden vent in the cave wall, allowing it to condense the green liquid.

Afterwards, he created several tens of secret rooms of varying sizes in accordance to the Controlling Spirit Sect Cultivator's Insect Breeding Insights. He placed the white spiders and other wondrous insects inside them before placing several restrictions nearby to prevent them from running away.

After finishing the most important matters, Han Li decided that it was still not the time to meditate and refine Qi. Instead, he carefully took out the light gray jade slip that he had acquired from the Emperor of Yue. It contained many strange secret techniques including the "External Reincarnation Technique" he had set his eyes on long ago.

Han Li immersed his spiritual sense into the jade slip and carefully read through the cultivation methods of this technique several times. Afterwards, he withdrew his spiritual sense and began contemplating what he had read. Although Han Li had previously come to a decision, after carefully thinking it over, he felt that cultivating this technique was truly dangerous.

The jade slip clearly said that if his refined clone were to be destroyed, the spiritual sense planted within the clone would be destroyed and irrecoverable. Furthermore, if his remaining

spiritual sense wasn't strong enough, it would be greatly damaged. At best, this would result in madness, at worst, he would suffer from Qigong Deviation and perish. In addition, even if he was successful, the "External Reincarnation" would only be an easily controlled high-level puppet that could cultivate. This was completely different from the rumored ability to split oneself into two, and was inferior to the divine abilities possessed by some cultivator clans.

However, Han Li had the "Five Element Blood Cores" and had a great opportunity to create a clone with a "Fiend Core". This was an extremely rare stroke of luck where he could obtain a puppet guard with the strength of a Core Formation cultivator! Although the puppet would only be considered to be at early Core Formation, he would still have the power to defend himself against any Foundation Establishment cultivator.

The most difficult and crucial aspect of cultivating a clone was that it required a corpse with spiritual roots. But Han Li was already in possession of a suitable corpse: Crooked Soul, a soulless refined corpse he had acquired long ago.

It stands to reason that extracting a cultivator's soul, especially that of a low grade cultivator, would cause the body's meridians to rupture due to the overbearing nature of the magic technique used, disallowing any further cultivation. This was why so many cultivators viewed Crooked Soul with surprise when they saw that a corpse possessed Spiritual Qi fluctuations. Although cases where a soul was extracted from a cultivator's body with its meridians intact did exist, they were flukes that wouldn't be encountered even once in a hundred times.

Unfortunately, this “External Reincarnation Technique” required the body to be intact after its soul had been extracted and that the cultivator must be of the sixth layer or lower. Such a suitable corpse would be hard to come by.

Although Han Li didn’t know why there were such strange requirements, he surmised that it probably had something to do with the ease of controlling the corpse after inserting a thread of spiritual sense into it.

Han Li might not know exactly how Yu Zitong and Doctor Mo created Crooked Soul, but Crooked Soul definitely satisfied all the requirements, making it an exceptionally good candidate for refining a clone.

As for the Emperor of Yue, it probably took an unknown amount of dead low-grade cultivators before he happened upon a suitable corpse.

Han Li sat cross-legged on the ground and pondered for a long time before deciding to cultivate the Great Development Technique to the second layer prior to refining the corpse. With that accomplished, he wouldn’t suffer much damage even if the clone perished. He had a deep understanding of the wondrous effects that the Great Development Technique would have on strengthening his Spiritual Sense.

Before he could cultivate the Great Development Technique, he would first have to recover his Foundation Establishment cultivation. In order to cultivate the External Reincarnation Technique, he would even have to cultivate to late Foundation

Establishment.

After attempting to refine a clone, regardless of success or failure, Han Li would still have to fumble about with cultivating the “Three Essence Revolutions”. After all, this cultivation art along with the “Azure Essence Sword Art” would be a crucial step along the great path towards Core Formation Stage.

Having mentally planned out his future cultivation, Han Li entered a secret room in his Immortal’s cave and began to refine Qi with the aid of medicinal pills.

He only took the “Yellow Dragon Pill” and the “Gold Marrow Pill” for now, two low-grade medicine pills. Taking Foundation Establishment Pills at his current stage would be far too violent for his body. It would be more appropriate to wait until after he had reached the seventh layer of Qi Condensation before taking them.

Without a bottleneck to Foundation Establishment, Han Li reckoned that he should be able to recover his cultivation relatively quickly.

Chapter 374: Cultivation Is Timeless

Time passed day after day.

Apart from maturing spiritual herbs and refining the required “Yellow Dragon Pills” and “Golden Marrow Pills”, Han Li refined Qi in bitter meditation the entire time. He also periodically trained the white spiders and other wondrous insects in accordance to the Controlling Spirit Sect Cultivator’s Insect Cultivation Insights. This could be considered his sole joy during his cultivation.

Han Li estimated that it would take him about a year to enter the ninth layer of Qi Condensation, a speed that was like wind when compared to his original speed.

However, Han Li was still somewhat unsatisfied at this speed. After he reached the ninth layer, he made a steeled resolution to take three Foundation Establishment Pills in continuation. By using its hugely strong medicinal power, Han Li used only another year to enter Foundation Establishment.

Now, he was able to make use of Innate Truefire.

Han Li immediately ceased taking low-grade medicine pills and started to refine medicine pills that would be more suitable for a Foundation Establishment cultivator.

According to Han Li’s assumptions, the Qi Refining Powder would have no effect on him because he had previously taken too much of it. As for the other three pill recipes, they should be able

to vigorously advance him to late Foundation Establishment without question.

But according to his original plans, Han Li wasn't going to immediately deepen his cultivation. Instead, he would only stockpile medicines and cultivate the Great Development Technique in preparation to refine a clone.

Originally, Han Li only needed half a year to cultivate the Great Development Technique to the first layer and receive its exceptional benefits.

Although Han Li felt gloomy about his inferior aptitude for elemental magic techniques, he had significant talent for the Great Development Technique. Thus, Han Li held much confidence in cultivating to the second layer of the Great Development Technique.

According to the incomplete collection of the Great Development Technique, his spiritual sense would be several times stronger and he would also be able to separate his consciousness into over a hundred different strands. When combined with the puppet technique, the frightening potential of the Great Development Technique would be fully displayed.

Although he knew that cultivating to the second layer would be more difficult than the first, it took far more time than Han Li had anticipated. He had originally believed that it would only take him three years to reach the second layer of the Great Development Technique, but Han Li discovered that it would take six years of diligent cultivation for him to barely reach the second layer. As

this would take twice the time that he had anticipated, Han Li felt extremely helpless.

Now that forcefully increasing his spiritual sense proved to be such a blistering headache, Han Li seemed to have recalled something with a pale face and trepidation.

During the third year of cultivating the Great Development Technique, the disciple of the middle-aged cultivator from the Immortal Records Pavilion came under orders to challenge Han Li at Minor Expanse Island.

As a result, he had been trapped in Han Li's formations for three entire days before Han Li happened to take notice of him and released him.

Because of the difficulty of cultivating the Great Development Technique, Han Li had completely forgotten about this matter.

Using his nameless Qi Restraining Technique to hide his true cultivation, Han Li managed to win by the slightest margin. Under the belief that Han Li had won only due to his slightly superior magic tools, the flustered man who was trapped within the formation spells for several days could only resentfully return.

Another three years later, Han Li finally managed to cultivate to the second layer of the Great Development Technique and now prepared to cultivate the "External Reincarnation Technique".

He first thoroughly relaxed for several days. With his soul at its peak state, he called for Crooked Soul to enter his hidden practice room and sit cross-legged across from him.

Han Li waved his arm, shutting the stone door to the room and staring at Crooked Soul with rapt attention in long silence.

Having seen Crooked Soul's ugly yet familiar face, surges of emotion flowed through Han Li's heart. He recalled matters he had long and quickly forgotten: the Seven Mysteries Sect, the Rainbow Mountains, and a certain familiar figure...

But after staring at Crooked Soul's cold, soulless gaze, Han Li let out a sigh. With no further hesitation, Han Li formed a windmill-shaped incantation gesture with his hands, and his body released an azure light, projecting a dark green light throughout the room.

Not long after, Han Li's face slightly grimaced in the green light and fine beads of sweat started to form on his forehead. A blinding white radiance then shot out from his eyes that none would dare to look at.

"HA!" Han Li suddenly let out a roar as his hands formed a strange incantation gesture. Though his body was still, he snorted out a thumb-sized green ball of light. It quickly flew into Crooked Soul's nostril and entered the rest of his body.

At this moment, Han Li's face was deathly pale with huge beads of sweat dripping down from his face, but the blinding light from his eyes became even brighter. Two fine streaks of white light then

shot out from his eyes into Crooked Soul's. Han Li's and Crooked Soul's bodies then simultaneously shivered.

The stone door of the hidden practice room was closed for an entire month. In the middle of the next month, the stone door of the hidden room slowly opened, revealing a haggard but extremely excited Han Li.

The clone refinement had been a bitter and tortuous struggle, but it had eventually resulted in success. Although he didn't know how it turned out, he knew that at the very least he hadn't failed, and there was no cultivation backlash, much to Han Li's relief.

But immediately after Han Li left the hidden room, he entered another room and went into seclusion. The clone refinement had significantly damaged his Origin Qi. If he didn't immediately take medicine and refined his Qi, there was a danger that he would once again drop down to the Qi Condensation Stage.

As for the refined clone, "Crooked Soul", it continued to remain in the hidden room. The thread of consciousness had yet to completely control the corpse and was being broken in.

After a few short months, Han Li had fully recovered the damage to his Origin Qi, but instead of leaving seclusion, he began to research the "Three Essence Revolutions" cultivation art.

The "Three Essence Revolutions" cultivation art clearly stated that when cultivators reached late Foundation Establishment, they were to scatter a majority of their cultivation through the "Azure

Essence Sword Art” and recultivate from early Foundation Establishment stage. This would compress one’s true essence and allow one to draw as close as possible to solidification, weakening the bottleneck to the Core Formation Stage.

According to the speculations of the expert who created this cultivation art, after three cycles of recultivation, one should have a fifty percent possibility of forming a golden core.

Although Han Li had unexpectedly scattered his cultivation during mid Foundation Establishment instead of scattering his cultivation when he reached late Foundation Establishment, he didn’t care in the least. To Han Li, the difference between scattering one’s cultivation during mid Foundation Establishment instead of late Foundation establishment was only a small degree of True Essence condensation. With the main idea of True Essence compression and solidification still at the center, there shouldn’t be any big problems if he were to scatter his cultivation two more times from late Foundation Establishment.

After several months of single-minded study of the “Three Essence Revolutions” cultivation art, he came to a full understanding of the cultivation art and entered his hidden room with a large amount of medicinal pills.

He had come to a resolute decision that he wouldn’t leave his Immortal’s cave until he finished the first revolutions of his cultivation art and reached the sixth layer of the Azure Essence Sword Art.

As for Crooked Soul who was now completely fused with Han Li’s

spiritual sense, Han Li had tirelessly prepared pre-Foundation Establishment medicines pills for him. As Crooked Soul had spiritual roots with three elements, he had greater aptitude than Han Li who had “false spiritual roots” with four elements. As a result, Crooked Soul’s cultivation speed was insanely fast with the assistance of medicine pills, no slower than Han Li’s recultivation speed.

According to Han Li estimates, it would only take two years for him to reach Foundation Establishment.

In addition, Han Li picked out the Devilish Art “Divine Blood Light” from the jade slip that emitted gray light for Crooked Soul to cultivate after he reached Foundation Establishment. After all, Han Li had personally seen the might of this Devilish Art from the Emperor of Yue himself.

As for the fact that this art didn’t have any continuation for Core Formation cultivators, Han Li didn’t mind much. This was because after Crooked Soul formed a Fiend Core, Crooked Soul would forever be at early Core Formation. There would be no difference whether or not there was a continuation of the magic art.

Han Li’s cultivation session went on for a truly long time!

It was the same as the common saying, “Cultivation is timeless”. In the mere blink of an eye, over twenty years had past.

During this large expanse of time, Han Li didn’t take a single step outside of his Immortal’s cave, nor did he show himself to the

island's inhabitants. Every since Han Li arrived at Minor Expanse Island, several hundred of its inhabitants would say that he nearly hadn't affected them at all. If they wanted to fish, they fished; if they wanted to farm, then they farmed!

Naturally, the inhabitants weren't too comfortable to discover that their two mountains were now constantly shrouded in a thick white fog. But after such a long period of time, the villagers became accustomed to the scene and no longer took notice of it.

However, the village elder would repeatedly warn the village's mischievous children not to approach the mountain's nearby fog under any circumstances. This was because once someone entered, they would disappear without a trace and couldn't come out. Only after suffering several days of entrapment and shouting out "Immortal Master Han" several times would they discover a path out.

As this matter had occurred several times, the villagers came to understand that Immortal Han disliked having others bother him.

Apart from wood chopping and fruit picking, no other affairs were carried out near the Minor Expanse Mountains.

As for the yearly expenditure of spirit stones for the protective formation, so long as the village head loudly shouted towards the mountain a few times, the yearly amount of spirit stones would fly out of the white mist on a tray. Those that came for spirit stones never came back empty-handed.

Of course, the original village head had passed away during these twenty years. The current village head was the the dark skinned fisherman Han Li had seen when he first arrived at the island, Hei Gui. However, he still fetched spirit stones in the exact same manner.

As such, while the inhabitants of the island weren't particularly loyal towards Immortal Han, they still had a decent impression of him.

Then one day, Han Li walked out of his Immortal's cave.

Chapter 375: A Pair Of Beauties

Stalwart Star Island's port was as lively as it had been previously. A great number of ships of all sizes scuttled about, either heading out to sea or docking at land. Occasionally, brilliant lights of various colors would flash from the sky, revealing the cultivators that were flying about. The mortals on the ground didn't view it to be odd; they were long accustomed to such sights.

But today, a streak of white light flew into the island at the speed of lightning. After pausing for a short moment at the harbor, it flew straight into the depths of the island.

If someone close to the white light were to see through it, they would notice the faint silhouette of two people: Han Li with magic power at the peak of Foundation Establishment due to completing the first revolution of the Three Essence Revolutions Technique and Crooked Soul, whose cultivation was about the same as Han Li as a result of the huge quantities of medicinal pills used during cultivation.

Having compressed his true essence for over twenty years, Han Li's cultivation was purer and deeper than other cultivators of similar rank. As for Crooked Soul, Han Li was extremely happy to find that his cultivation had nearly caught up to his own.

If Crooked Soul didn't require certain particular secondary ingredients to form his fiend core and Han Li required to perform preparations before attempting to form his core, he wouldn't have left his Immortal's cave at Minor Expanse Island.

For this outing, apart from collecting on Master Gu's promise of spirit stones and handling his previously mentioned affairs, Han Li would return straight to Minor Expanse Island. As he was at a crucial point in his cultivation, he couldn't allow any distractions.

With that in mind, Han Li and Crooked Soul flew deeper into the island towards "Stalwart Star City".

Since he still had quite a few spirit stones, he had no need to rush towards the Gu Estate. He would first buy a few things before visiting there on the way back.

Many hours later, Han Li could faintly see the tall walls of a huge city. Although he hadn't been to "Stalwart Star City" before, the markings on the map and the majestic, imposing aura of the city left no room for doubt.

Han Li suddenly stamped his foot on the Divine Wind boat, wishing to descend. However, Han Li was surprised to have run across an obviously placed restriction.

This city truly deserved to be called the greatest city in Stalwart Star Island. It had a large-scale sky restriction at a distance far away.

In truth, with Han Li's peak Foundation Establishment cultivation, he could easily break through the restrictions and continue on his way, at most using up only a bit more magic power. However, Han Li didn't wish to attract attention. Instead, he stepped on the front end of his Divine Wind Boat, causing it to

slowly descend.

Han Li and Crooked Soul calmly disembarked from the Divine Wind Boat. After putting away the Divine Wind Boat in his storage pouch, Han Li looked at the huge city from a distance and couldn't help but leisurely walk towards it with an unconcealed smile.

“Stalwart Star Island” was at least four times larger than East Stone City!

As Han Li was walking on some street in Stalwart Star Island, he noticed that the roads were wide enough to fit several carriages side by side and felt somewhat impressed by their size.

Soon after, Han Li asked a mortal for the location of the “Sky Capital Market”. The two then headed towards the northern part of the city without delay.

‘This is the so-called Sky Capital Market?’ Han Li looked at the scene before him with surprise.

He saw a huge misty barrier covering the entire northern section of Stalwart Star City. There were at least over a hundred streets there, which was completely incongruous with his mental image of an isolated street.

But what most surprised Han Li was that at the center of the northern district, there was a huge pavilion floating over a hundred meters in the air. The pavilion was an alluring emerald-

green, and it released a faint glimmer, seemingly made of an enormous piece of jade; it was extremely eye-catching.

Han Li blankly stared at the sparkling reflections of sunlight that shined off of the pavilion. Although he didn't know how this pavilion came to be or why it was floating, Han Li truly felt it was an extremely rare sight.

At this moment, Han Li's expression changed. He suddenly restrained his Spiritual Qi, maintaining an external appearance as an eighth layer Qi Condensation cultivator.

Soon after, Han Li heard footsteps from behind him and a pleasant female voice spoke from behind him, "Is this Senior's and Fellow Daoist's first time at Sky Capital Market? Cultivators that see the Dreamcloud Pavilion for the first time usually remain shocked for quite a long time!"

The woman's voice was as pleasant as an oriole's chirp. Han Li turned around to see a group of three male cultivators and two female cultivators standing about a dozen steps away.

The two women were quite charming, beautiful, and dressed quite boldly. Their simple garments not only revealed their pure white arms and their flawless lower legs, but they also didn't wear any shoes or socks, revealing their beautiful feet.

But what was even more eye-catching were the shining, exquisite golden bands that they wore on their foreheads and wrists, giving them an even more provocative presence.

The three men had rather ordinary appearances, and one of them even had a face full of pockmarks, appearing quite unsightly.

These five were Qi Condensation cultivators of about the tenth layer. It seemed they were also going to enter the light barrier.

After taking another few looks at these world shocking women, he bewilderedly asked, “You Fellow Daoists are?”

“This beautiful young woman is my good friend, Yuan Yao. We are rogue cultivators from a nearby island. We heard that rare materials from other islands would be sold here today. These three are Fellow Daoists that we’ve met on the way here. We came together to take a look!” The one who spoke was a pleasant, dainty round-face woman. She sized up Han Li and Crooked Soul with great curiosity and smiled as she spoke. Judging from her voice, she was the one who had previously asked the question.

The woman by her side was an astonishing beauty at the prime of her youth. Not only was her skin appeared beyond soft and purer than snow, her skintight clothes revealed her graceful, well-endowed body, causing men who saw her to involuntarily swallow. She truly was a beauty capable of wrecking a country.

However, this woman didn’t look at Han Li. Her bright and beautiful eyes were stuck onto Crooked Soul with an astonished expression on her dainty face.

Han Li inwardly frowned upon seeing this.

Although Han Li had concealed his true cultivation with a Qi Condensation technique, Crooked Soul's late Foundation Establishment cultivation was completely out in the open. According to Han Li, by having a late Foundation Establishment cultivator accompanying him, he would be able to avoid most trouble and prevent any other cultivators from maliciously targeting him. Admittedly, having an expert with awesome strength such as Crooked Soul was truly a bit too eye-catching.

With that in mind, Han Li calmly said, "We've let our Fellow Daoists see a funny sight! I am Han LI and this is my Martial Uncle Crooked Soul. This is our first time at the Sky Capital Market."

The dainty woman replied with a charming giggle, "It was like I said! This was definitely Senior Crooked Soul's and Fellow Daoist Han's first time seeing the Dreamcloud Pavilion; otherwise, why else would they stand still? How about we go in together? Senior Martial Sister and I can introduce you two to the many shops of the Sky Capital Market. Although we aren't natives to Stalwart Star Island, we have visited the Sky Capital Market several times and know it like the backs of our hands."

The peerless beauty, Yuan Yao, then spoke with an enthusiastic gaze and a charming smile that men couldn't refuse, "Yes! If Senior Crooked Soul doesn't find it undesirable, us two Martial Sisters can act as a guide for Senior so that he may spend less time finding the things he wishes to buy."

Upon hearing this, the three male cultivators who were travelling together with them couldn't help revealing unsightly

expressions. But in the face of Crooked Soul, a Foundation Establishment “Senior”, they could only silently sulk.

Han Li felt stunned!

This was the first time he had encountered beautiful women who took the initiative to accompany him. However, it seemed that the two were most interested in the “Senior” Crooked Soul with his deep cultivation; Han Li was merely an incidental addition.

Although he didn’t know what the two women had in mind, Han Li had no intention to accompanying such provocatively beautiful women.

As such, Han Li controlled the previously silent Crooked Soul to hoarsely speak, “There is no need! I don’t like keeping company in large numbers. Martial Nephew Han, let us go on our way!” Crooked Soul then grabbed the somewhat apologetic Han Li and made large strides toward the light barrier, revealing no intention of conversing with the two women.

Crooked Soul’s stiff demeanor left the two women stunned. While they appeared very disappointed, the three male cultivators’ spirits were strongly roused, and they inwardly felt great joy.

“Let it be, young ladies! That Senior Crooked is a man with a strange temperament. We’d better go in too!” The pockmarked man said, attempting to curry favor with the two women.

The two peerless beauties took a look at each other and agreed with a forced smile, entering the light barrier with light steps.

By this time, Han Li and Crooked Soul had long disappeared into the market streets without a trace.

When the two women saw this, they wore a helpless expression and entered a randomly chosen store.

Chapter 376: Spirit Snow Water And Liquid Heavenfire

As the two women entered the store closely followed by the three male cultivators who were unwilling to part with them, Han Li and Crooked Soul appeared from behind a building.

Seeing the two women enter the store, Han Li revealed a thoughtful expression.

After looking on for a moment, he brought Crooked Soul to another street.

At first glance, the shops here and the mortal shops outside appeared no different. The shops here were laid in rows on each side of the street in even squares and carried signboard and flags at their storefront with names such as “Wu’s Assorted Goods”, “Chen Ji’s Magic Tools”, “Five Elements Magic Tools Store”, and “Huo Yang’s Raw Materials”.

Han Li didn’t enter these shops, instead choosing to walk down the street towards the center of the Sky Capital Market.

According to Han Li’s experiences, the powerful stores should be positioned in the best area, and that’s below the Dreamcloud Pavilion. As Han Li grew closer, he looked at the fantastical pavilion in the sky and couldn’t help but hurry his steps.

At this moment, the market streets had quite a number of

cultivators going about their way, entering stores on occasion.

After walking about a kilometer, Han Li knew he had found the right place. His eyes lit with realization upon seeing a huge plaza that spanned about half an acre.

Stripes of fine, white jade filled the floor of the plaza, making for a sight of refined beauty. The center of the plaza was completely empty aside from the Dreamcloud Pavilion floating above it. It floated above with its doors shut, lacking any intention of inviting visitors.

Six small, uniquely-styled palace pavilions towered around the plaza, each a similar distance away from the center. They faintly seemed to stand in opposition of each other. No other store dared to place themselves among these six stores at the plaza.

After taking another glance at the pavilion, Han Li brought his gaze towards the six palace pavilions on the ground.

“The Mountain Sea Pavilion, White Water Pavilion, Jade Band Pavilion...” Han Li muttered the names of these six stores to himself as he sized up the nearby cultivators that were entering and leaving them. He wanted to enter the store with clientele of the highest status.

But after a moment, Han Li frowned and couldn't help but inwardly curse. This store was being hosted on the wrong site; it was taken from its source without permission. In addition, the customers of these stores were all of nearly the same status. After

taking a round trip examining the six palace pavilions, he felt both reluctance and excitement.

Feeling gloomy, Han Li attentively sized up the six stores once more, and this time, he discovered something odd. The symbols embroidered on the banners outside each of the stores seemed to hold some sort of unique, deeper meaning.

The Mountain Sea Pavilion's banner was embroidered with a blue mythical animal, the White Water Pavilion had a small, golden sword, the Jade Band Pavilion had a green mushroom...

Upon seeing this, Han Li felt that he had been mistaken.

After a moment of thought, he walked over to the store nearest him, the White Water Pavilion, in order to confirm his thoughts. Crooked Soul naturally followed after him without a sound.

Upon entering the palace hall of the White Water Pavilion, he found the interior to be somewhat large, about a hundred meters wide. There were rows of white jade engraved shelves that displayed nearly a hundred sparkling magic tools of all colors. But with a quick look, Han Li found that these magic tools were all only high grade magic tools at best. They were simply beneath him.

In front of the shelves stood five sharply dressed attendants in azure clothes, all currently taking care of about eight cultivators who were selecting a few magic tools.

But once Han Li and Crooked Soul entered, a sharp-eyed attendant noticed that Crooked Soul was a Foundation Establishment cultivator. Although he couldn't tell the exact depth of Crooked Soul's cultivation, he still hurriedly rushed forward with bright eyes.

After giving Crooked Soul a formal salute, he smartly asked, "Senior, what magic tools do you wish to buy. Since common magic tools are certain to be beneath you, how about Senior accompany me to the side room? The shopkeeper has acquired a few new top grade magic tools. Shall we go take a look?"

Han Li couldn't help but silently smile upon hearing such exquisitely crafted words, "Lead the way, Junior. I'll take a look for now.

Having heard Crooked Soul's arrogant tone, the attendant grew even happier. He invited them to a side room off the main hall with a smile before politely taking his leave to fetch the shopkeeper.

Just as he left, a dainty maid came in and poured the two of them a cup of some oddly fragrant tea before silently withdrawing.

With a trace of politeness, Han Li lifted the tea cup and took a taste. But not long after, an eccentric middle-aged man with a long-whiskered mustache and beard had arrived.

He walked in with a beaming smile. But after he discovered the depth of Crooked Soul's cultivation, he involuntarily revealed

shock and hurriedly saluted Crooked Soul, saying, “I truly didn’t expect that Fellow Daoist had reached False Core Stage. My Congratulations! I am the shopkeeper Cao Lu. I offer my best wishes for Fellow Daoist in entering Core Formation!”

His solemn, respectful expression left Han Li stunned!

His thoughts quickly churned for a moment before realizing that he was referring to Crooked Soul’s near peak Foundation Establishment cultivation. Going along with the situation, Han Li willed Crooked Soul to say, “Fellow Daoist jests! How is Core Formation so easily reached? Actually, I’ve come to make preparations for this very matter. However, when I initially came to the Sky Capital Market, I truly didn’t know where to find the ingredients I required: Spirit Snow Water and Liquid Heavenfire. I hope Fellow Daoist Cao could give me some advice!” Crooked Soul spoke with a very courteous tone, as the strange-looking middle-aged man was a mid Foundation Establishment cultivator.

Shopkeeper Cao instantly replied, “Hehe, that isn’t a problem! Our Six United Palaces have mutual respect, and sense of propriety. I’ll get in touch with Jade Band Pavilion’s Fellow Daoist Ouyang, and immediately send them over should they have them.” Without the slightest hesitation, he took out a sound transmission talisman and softly said a few words into it before it turned into a streak of red light and flew out the room.

Following this, Shopkeeper Cao cordially chatted with Crooked Soul, casually asking about Crooked Soul’s origins and affiliations.

But Han Li couldn’t possibly divulge such secrets to a stranger he

just met. He merely had Crooked Soul vaguely state that he was a cultivator that had newly arrived at the island. Because he had unexpectedly ran into his Martial Nephew Han Li, he decided to stay on Stalwart Star Island for the time being.

Shopkeeper Cao's smile grew even wider. His friendliness reached a level Han Li found difficult to tolerate.

Just as doubts were stirring in Han Li's mind, a large azure-clothed man with a curled beard walked into the room. His face was a dark red and he had a lofty, burly body. He appeared extremely bold and powerful!

"Fellow Daoist Cao, why do you suddenly want Spirit Snow Water and Liquid Heavenfire? Could it be someone wishes to form their core?" A large man suddenly walked into the room with a forthright smile. After looking at Han Li for a moment, he turned his attention to Crooked Soul.

Han Li inwardly frowned. This person asked a question while clearly already knowing the answer. He was not straightforward and bold as his appearance had suggested; he was definitely a deep schemer. Han Li's heart trembled and became more vigilant of this person.

Naturally, Han Li and Crooked Soul had calm expressions, and they even wore slight smiles.

"Hehe, Fellow Daoist Ouyang, let me give you an introduction. This is Fellow Daoist Crooked Soul. He just arrived at this island.

This is his Martial Nephew Han Li, a resident of our island. Fellow Daoist Crooked Soul has reached False Core Stage and wishes to strive to form his core.” Cao Lu pointed at Crooked Soul and Han Li, speaking with a beaming smile.

“Hehe, congratulations Fellow Daoist! If Fellow Daoist succeeds in forming his core, our Stalwart Star Sea will have another pillar of strength!” The curly-bearded man surnamed Ouyang spoke cordially with a wide grin.

He suddenly appeared to have thought of something and patted the back of his head. He embarrassingly said, “Ah, my damn memory, I’ve forgotten about Crooked Soul’s impatient need of Spirit Snow water and Liquid Heavenfire. But please be at ease, I brought over enough for two people to form their cores.” The large man with a curly mustache, Fellow Daoist Ouyang, took out two jade boxes shining with yellow light and placed them on the table in front of Han Li.

“These two boxes holding spiritual objects were carved out of earth attribute jade acquired from the deep sea. It can also be considered a strange treasure. But when compared with the price of what it contains, it is naturally incomparable!” Although curly-bearded man’s words seemed as if he didn’t care, he seemed to hold some pride in them.

“Then I truly must thank you!” Crooked Soul calmly said his thanks before carefully opening the boxes.

One of the boxes contained a clear, transparent liquid. Upon opening the box, a wondrous, cold Yin Qi directly blew past

Crooked Soul. In contrast, the other box contained a fiery, scarlet liquid that released a scorching air.

After inspecting these items for a long while, Crooked Soul shut the lids of the boxes with a satisfied appearance. He raised his head and serenely asked, “How many spirit stones does Fellow Daoist want in order to part with these items?”

Although Spirit Snow Water and Liquid Heavenfire weren’t as rare as thousand year spirit herbs, they were spiritual objects that were difficult to find, but as they were items that were needed to enter Core Formation, Han Li was determined to acquire them.

Chapter 377: Pill Formulas And Demon Cores

The large, curly-bearded man waved his hand, speaking casually, “Although our Six United Palaces didn’t enter the Four Great Merchants Alliance, we have quite a lot of prestige in the Scattered Star Seas. These two items are rare, but they are beneath our notice. Please allow our Six United Palaces to present the Spirit Snow Ice and Liquid Heavenfire to Fellow Daoist Crooked Soul as our early congratulations for your core formation.”

Han Li didn’t feel any excitement. Instead, he inwardly frowned, refraining from having Crooked Soul take them.

‘You would give such previous items as a gift? I am not convinced there is such a great thing in this world. Since Crooked Soul is at what they call false core stage, could it be that they have hidden intentions for currying favor in such an excessive manner?’ Han Li became increasingly cautious with that in mind.

Crooked Soul then shook his head and sternly said, “That won’t do. There is no reward without cost. These two items should be sold for what they’re worth. I have the spirit stones for them! Or is there something that you two are too embarrassed to say?” After saying this, Crooked Soul revealed a mysterious smile.

Seeing that Crooked Soul was so guarded against against such a great gift, Cao Lu and the curly-bearded man couldn’t help but give each other a mutual glance after a moment of astonishment.

After meeting each other's gaze, Cao Lu dryly coughed and said, "It seems we've made fools of ourselves. Since Fellow Daoist Crooked Soul understands, I will tell it as it is! Our Six United Palaces do have a few matters that require your assistance. These two spiritual items are a kindly advance. If this affair is concluded, our stores will give you a great award." Cao Lu spoke rather cordially while the curly-bearded man revealed embarrassment.

Han Li inwardly sneered and had Crooked Soul tactfully decline while wearing a faint smile, "I won't conceal this from you two. Currently, I am entirely focused on forming my core and have no inclination for any other affairs. I am truly sorry, but it would be best for you to find someone else.

"Crooked Soul" didn't have any interest in listening to the matter and put a stop to the conversation.

Cao Lu and the curly-bearded man didn't take offense at his response and revealed smooth smiles instead.

"Hehe, since Fellow Daoist Crooked Soul's Core Formation occupies his mind, he should definitely lend a hand! After this matter is concluded, our Six United Palaces will reward you with a Dustfall Pill. It is of great assistance towards Core Formation and will certainly increase the odds of successfully forming your core!" The curly-bearded man said with a chuckle.

"Dustfall Pill?" Crooked Soul muttered to himself with slight surprise.

Cao Lu replaced his smile with a solemn expression and said, “That’s right. This matter requires six cultivators at False Core stage, and we just need one more. Fellow Daoist’s arrival is extremely timely. All of the cultivators who participate will be given a Dustfall Pill as payment.”

The “Dustfall Pill” was an item of great renown in the Scattered Star Seas. However, Han Li, who had remained in isolation since initially arriving on the island, had no idea how wondrous the pill was rumored to be.

After muttering to himself for a moment, Crooked Soul solemnly asked, “Could you tell me the concrete details of the task I am to assist with before making my decision?”

“Of course we can. It isn’t a complicated matter. It is just that our stores have discovered a grade six demon beast and wish to acquire its demon core. As a result, we thought to invite some outsiders to assist in the hunt!” Cao Lu chuckled and played it down.

“Grade six demon beast?” Crooked Soul bitterly smiled. Han Li had nearly stood up to loudly curse at them. The grade four mantis demon beast had nearly claimed his life, and now, they wanted to fight a grade six demon beast. Did they want to send these cultivators to their deaths?

Having seen Crooked Soul’s doubtful expression, the curly-bearded man quickly gave an explanation, “Please be at ease, our stores have come up with a complete plan which significantly lowers the danger. Apart from having two of our store’s Core Formation elders act, we will also place down a “Six Flowing

Ripples Formation”. Six False Core Formation cultivators will be enough to maintain the formation.”

“A Six Flowing Ripples Formation!” Han Li felt that the name of that formation sounded quite familiar, as if he had heard it before in formation spell insights that Xin Ruyin had previously given to him.

Han Li then willed Crooked Soul to delay his decision, “Because of the importance of this matter, please give me two days to consider. Will it be acceptable if I give you my answer then?”

Crooked Soul’s vague words left Cao Lu stunned, but he soon agreed with a wide smile.

But when Han Li and Crooked Soul left, Cao Lu and the large, curly-bearded man had them take the Spirit Snow Water and Liquid Heavenfire along with them. With a few polite words, they said that even if Crooked Soul later refused, it wouldn’t matter, and that they were to be treated solely as gifts.

Crooked Soul faintly smiled in response to his coaxing words, but he didn’t refuse, taking the jade boxes with him. After a few polite words, he then left the palace pavilion with Han Li.

After leaving the White Water Pavilion, Han Li turned around to take a look at the pavilion. He lightly shook his head before finding his way out of the plaza.

Since these six palace pavilions formed a single group, Han Li naturally wouldn't visit the other stores to haggle over any prices. After all, he had already taken the items they had given him for free. As a result, he bluntly intended to visit the surrounding shops for a few other items he wished to acquire.

Apart from the Spirit Snow Water and Liquid Heavenfire for Core Formation, he also wanted to purchase a few materials to create grade two puppets. Although he had already grown the most important material, the several-hundred-year old ironwood, he still needed to buy large quantities of secondary materials such as source iron and cloud essence stone.

He also needed a few materials to refine the "Spirit Feed Pill". After refining these pills, he would be able to formally train the white spiders.

With these thoughts in mind, Han Li entered a small store with miscellaneous goods, managing to buy a majority of what he needed. The rest of the items he required were rarer and would require visiting several other stores to acquire them.

As he was browsing through the many stores, he mostly focused on the stores that sold ancient records of medicine pills and cultivation arts. After all, he had nearly used all of his pill formulas and wished to acquire one or two more.

As for cultivation arts, although their prices were unreasonably high, they would provide him with an explanation of the types of cultivation arts used in the Scattered Star Seas.

After completing a round trip, Han Li felt amazement!

While having Crooked Soul wait outside, he entered a medicine pill shop, asking if they had any Foundation Establishment stage pill formulas for sale. The shop assistant unexpectedly showed him several tens of pill formulas, causing Han Li to nearly bite his tongue in shock.

Although he couldn't bring himself to believe it, he still carefully examined the pill formulas and the outcome was complete shock.

Regardless of whether the pill formulas used rare or common materials, they all required demon beast cores instead of spiritual herbs. The rarer medicine pills even required the inner core of sixth and seventh grade demon beasts.

While these pill formulas also required spiritual herbs that were several hundreds of years old, the spiritual herbs used in the formulas were only auxiliary ingredients; they could be replaced with other spiritual herbs instead.

As such, Han Li acquired a thick stack of pill formulas and remained dumbfounded for a long while.

Under the baffled gaze of the store assistant, he had casually bought several usable formulas at a low price and walked out in a daze.

A short moment later, he felt somewhat unsatisfied and ran over to several other medicinal pill shops, discovering that apart from low grade Qi Condensation pill formulas, all other pill formulas required demon beast cores.

Finally, Han Li's couldn't help but make a careful inquiry to a shopkeeper about whether there were any high grade pill formulas that didn't require demon beast cores. The shopkeeper looked at Han Li as if he were an idiot for a long while before saying, "What else would you use to refine a high grade medicine pill, if not a demon core beast?"

Han Li then dejectedly walked out of the store and completely gave up on the matter.

It seems that the Pill Dao of the Scattered Star Seas followed a different path than that of the Heavenly South Region. They used the cores of demon seabests as the central ingredient of medicinal pills rather than spiritual herbs.

After some careful thought, Han Li found this to be quite reasonable. The sea was vast and without end, containing a countless number of demon beasts. With their ancestors incapable of causing a complete extinction of resources, the circumstances in the Scattered Star Seas was far better than that of the Heavenly South Region. It seems that these pill formulas had been passed down since ancient times!

As Han Li was thinking while standing on the remote corner of some road, he carefully looked through his collection of recently purchased pill formulas for one with the name of "Foundation

Establishment Pill”.

The pill formula was mostly the same as the one as Han Li had remembered. However, the heavenly spiritual medicines that were found only in the blood-red forbidden area were instead replaced with grade five demon cores.

When Han Li saw this, he put away the pill formulas and folded his arms before entering deep contemplation.

Chapter 378: Going Out To Sea (1)

After a long while, Han Li finally awoke from his contemplations with a plan in mind.

Nothing appearing out of the ordinary, he proceeded to visit the shops selling ancient records of cultivation techniques. This trip didn't result in any surprises. He was quite familiar with the cultivation arts and Five Element Techniques being sold as they weren't much different from those in the Heavenly South Region.

Though it should be said that the water attribute magic techniques were more plentiful. There were even a few new techniques that he hadn't heard of before.

Han Li bought these new magic techniques along with a book he accidentally found, Pill Dao Evaluations. The reason he bought this book was because it contained an expert's description and commentary of the "Dustfall Pill". Han Li intended to carefully study it before coming to a decision about the Six United Palaces' request.

With no interest in buying anything else, Han Li and Crooked Soul left the Sky Capital Market along with the city.

Not long after they left Stalwart Star City, Han Li and Crooked Soul took to the skies and flew toward the Gu Clan Estate.

About half a day later, Han Li gazed at the somewhat familiar scene of the Gu Clan Estate's earthen walls. But instead of

immediately descending towards the Gu Clan Estate, he decided to first land at the small hilltop to the side of the estate and take a look at the small wooden house he had constructed.

The small wooden house still stood in its original location; however, it was clear that it had greatly aged, and some areas had blackened from rot.

When Han Li saw this, he lightly sighed before opening the door and entering the house.

“Huh?!” Han Li was surprised. The room wasn’t covered in a layer of dust nor was there the rotting scent he had expected. Instead, the room was swept clean, the table, chair, and bed didn’t have a single speck of dust. There was even a pot of blue flowers on the wooden table.

Han Li was at a loss for a moment, but he couldn’t stop himself from breaking out into laughter. “It seems the Gu Clan had put quite some thought into this!” Han Li stroked his nose as he muttered to himself.

Afterwards, Han Li left the wooden house without any feelings of attachment and left Crooked Soul on the hilltop, slowly walking towards the Gu Clan Estate by himself.

Han Li had no intention of hurriedly flying towards the Gu Clan. Although the Gu Clan’s spell formation posed no problem to him, the Gu Clan Master could be considered an old friend; naturally, it’d be better to be polite.

But when Han Li walked in front of the Gu Clan's gate, two imposingly strong gate guards had noticed him. One of them suspiciously asked, "Who are you? What brings you to our Gu Clan?"

Han Li smiled and spoke in a soft voice, "Tell your clan's master that an old friend surnamed Han has come."

"Our clan's lord doesn't see outsiders. Wait, Han?... Could it be that you are Immortal Master Han?" The large man had initially rejected him, but after sizing up Han Li, he suddenly revealed doubt.

"You know of me?" Han Li made a slight frown.

"So it really is Immortal Han! Please wait for a moment, Immortal Master. I will send a report to the Manor Lord!" The large man spoke no further and ran towards the manor.

Han Li expressionlessly looked towards the manor and spoke no further.

Not long after, a large group of people left the manor. The old man that was leading them smiled widely upon seeing Han Li and loudly shouted, "Immortal Han, you've finally returned! I've waited for quite a few years!"

Afterwards, the old man hastily walked forward to salute Han Li.

The others followed suit, each respectfully saluting Han Li.

Han Li attentively gazed at the old man's familiar face. This was definitely the Gu Clan Master, but his hair was now white and his face was decrepit.

“Mister Gu, I trust that you've been well?” Han Li asked with a relaxed expression.

Under Master Gu's respectful welcome, Han Li entered a huge residence at the center of the Gu Estate.

After entering a room, Master Gu took the initiative to hand over a large sack of spirit stones to Han Li without waiting for him to say anything. In addition, he gave Han Li a cordial introduction to a few of the young children of the Gu Clan. He particularly made an effort to introduce his eldest son, a thirty-year-old youth named Gu Kai.

How could Han Li not see what the Gu Clan Master intended? The Gu Clan Master knew that the end of his life was drawing near, and he wished for Han Li to continue providing some assistance to his clan after his passing.

Han Li faintly smiled and said some casual promises for the sake of their past friendship.

The Gu Clan Master felt great joy and immediately called for a feast on behalf of Han Li; however, Han Li tactfully declined.

Following, Han Li had a chat with the Gu Clan Master before swiftly departing from the Gu Clan Estate.

After leaving, Han Li fetched Crooked Soul from the hilltop and flew towards a small, nearby village. Han Li quickly found an inn and spent the night studying the “Pill Dao Evaluations” without any sleep.

On the next day, Han Li had a general understanding about the medicine pills of the Scattered Star Seas. As for the Dustfall Pill, he had examined its description several times.

In accordance to the book, the Dustfall Pill not only required the cores of several uncommon demon beasts, but it also required a large amount of rarely seen spiritual herbs to refine. It was an undoubtedly precious item.

The pill really does have the wondrous effect of increasing the odds of Core Formation. Although the increased odds couldn't be considered to be much and it can only be taken during the formation of one's core, it is seen as a treasure to cultivators on the verge of Core Formation. To cultivators wishing to form their core, any items capable of raising their odds of success by even a single percent were greatly coveted but extremely rare.

Nevertheless, Han Li understood that since the six palaces were offering this rare medicine pill as payment, the task wouldn't be nearly as easy as maintaining a formation. There would certainly be a large amount of danger if he went, and only the Heavens

would know what troubles he would encounter.

However, Han Li truly thirsted for this “Dustfall Pill”. After all, both he and Crooked Soul were soon facing Core Formation.

Leaving his own poor odds aside, Crooked Soul’s Fiend Core was said to have a one-third chance of Core Formation. As the probability of failure was so high, he was unable to feel at ease. He needed to acquire the Dustfall Pill!

After sinking into bitter contemplation for a long while, he eventually came to the decision to face the unknown danger. After all, both he and Crooked soul were late Foundation Establishment cultivators. If any danger arose, he should be able to protect himself without problem.

In addition, it appeared that the Six United Palaces held a significant amount of power. Forming a connection to them now, should prove to be rather useful while in the Scattered Star Seas.

However, he must first make some discreet inquiries about the reputation of the Six United Palaces. If relations were to turn sour immediately after the matter is concluded, he’d greatly suffer.

Having come to a decision, Han Li brought Crooked Soul back to Stalwart Star City.

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Half a month later, an extremely huge ship sailed into the port of Stalwart Star Island. After a short moment, two streaks of light, one white and one blue, shot towards the boat from a faraway place and boarded it without any hesitation.

After the light faded away, three people appeared on board the ship: a lofty, and strong but ugly man, a youth with a common appearance, and an odd middle-aged man with an aged appearance.

A wide-eyed man with thick eyebrows walked out to respectfully greet the robust man and youth, “Welcome to our ship, Immortal Masters. I am the ship’s captain, Luo Zheng. The other Immortal Masters are on already board. I will now bring everyone to the general location of the demon beast.”

The Immortal Masters he addressed were naturally Crooked Soul and Han Li. As for the middle-aged man, he was the shopkeeper of the White Water Pavilion, Cao Lu.

“Fellow Daoist Crooked Soul, take care! I must return to take care of a few matters.” After exchanging a few polite words, Cao Lu flew off.

The thick-browed man lowered his head, before saying, “Please come in, we’ve already prepared rooms for you. The ship will soon depart.”

Han Li gazed at the ship as he silently entered its hull with Crooked Soul. As for Luo Zheng, he followed right behind them.

At this moment, the huge ship slowly began to move once more.

Upon entering the hull of the ship, Han Li was surprised by what he saw. It wasn't at all like the small passageway Han Li had imagined. Instead, there was a luxurious hall that spanned over forty meters.

Embroidered carpet covered the hall's floor and a long sandalwood table embedded with gold and silver was at the center of the room. There were over a dozen chairs around it, occupied by several people chatting. Once Han Li and Crooked Soul entered, several icy, stern gazes swept past them.

Their gazes merely swept past Han Li before focusing their eyes on Crooked Soul.

Crooked Soul blurred and covered Han Li's front. He then expressionlessly said, "I am Crooked Soul. This is my Martial Nephew Han Li! What are you Fellow Daoists called?"

Chapter 379: Going Out To Sea (2)

A middle-aged woman that appeared to be about forty years old stood up and spoke with a beaming smile, “Welcome, Fellow Daoist Crooked Soul. I am the Six United Palace’s Feng Sanniang. I will be in charge of controlling the formation that everyone will be maintaining.”

Although this woman couldn’t be said to be gorgeous, she still had hints of beauty.

“My greetings, Fellow Daoist Feng.” Crooked Soul spoke neither humbly nor arrogantly and brought Han Li towards the table.

The many unfamiliar cultivators in the hall had already entered Han Li’s view: a middle-aged Confucian scholar with an ordinary appearance, a charming young woman that appeared about twenty years old, an old man with ash-colored eyes, a youth covered in glowing red light. With the addition of Feng Sanniang, there were exactly five people.

The charming young woman was an early Foundation Establishment cultivator, however, and sat closely together with the Confucian scholar. From their intimate appearance, it seemed they were Dao companions.

As Han Li was pondering, Feng Sanniang started talking with a charming smile, “Fellow Daoist Crooked has arrived just in time. I was just talking about the transformations of the Six Flowing Ripples Formation! If we become more familiar with the formation

in advance, the matter will definitely proceed much more smoothly when the time comes. But before then, I must introduce Fellow Daoist Crooked Soul to you all!” Feng Sanniang was clearly very adept at dealing with others, and with a only few words she reduced the distance between everyone in the hall.

“These two were sent by Tail Star Island’s Island Master, Senior Zhan Tai. This is his brilliant disciple, Fellow Daoist Mao, and his Dao Companion, Fellow Daoist Xue!” Feng Sanniang first introduced the middle-aged Confucian scholar and the young woman to Han Li.

After coldly glancing at Han Li, the middle-aged Confucian scholar arrogantly said, “Crooked Soul, a cultivator from Stalwart Star Island? I know of many people, but why is it that I’ve never heard of your esteemed self?”

For some unknown reason, this middle-aged Confucian scholar found Crooked Soul displeasing to the eye and shot an insulting statement at him.

Feng Sanniang’s beaming expression involuntarily dropped for a moment before recovering.

“I wasn’t originally a Stalwart Star Island cultivator. It was only recently that I arrived the island to visit my Martial Nephew Han Li, so there is nothing odd in not knowing my name! Moreover, this is the first time I’ve ever heard your name as well.” Crooked Soul calmly mocked in return.

“You...”

The middle-aged Confucian Scholar appeared furious. Just as his face darkened and he was about to say something, Feng Sanniang quickly interrupted and changed the subject, “I’ll now introduce this elder, Goldturtle Island’s hidden cultivator, Fellow Daoist Qing Suanzi. Although few know of him, there are few Foundation Establishment cultivators that can match his wood element magic techniques! As for Fellow Daoist Yan, he is even more impressive. With his hidden fire constitution, he managed to cultivate his Pure Yang Truefire to perfection by himself.”

“Fellow Daoist Qing! Fellow Daoist Yan!” Han Li nodded his head towards the old man and the youth.

Although the two were also late Foundation Establishment, Han Li felt a far deeper pressure from them than the middle-aged Confucian scholar. As their cultivation was by no means shallow, Han Li was unwilling to casually slight them.

“Hello, Fellow Daoist Crooked Soul!”

“I send you my regards!”

The two weren’t high-handed and gave Crooked Soul a faint smile.

This caused the middle-aged Confucian scholar to feel even more uneasy.

As such, without waiting for Feng Sanniang to speak further, he suddenly stood and said with a wooden expression, “I am going to return to my room and meditate. I’ll leave the matter of the formation spell for later.”

Then, with a wave of his sleeve, he turned around and left the hall. The young woman glanced apologetically at the others before following after him.

“Humph! What right does he have to be arrogant, the fact that he has an island lord for a master?” The youth surnamed Yan whose body shined with red light spoke with slight anger.

The old man’s and Feng Sanniang’s expressions slightly shifted. While the old man’s face became expressionless immediately after, Feng Sanniang called for Crooked Soul to sit down with a wide smile, as if wanting to brush away the matter with the Confucian Scholar.

“Don’t we need six people? Fellow Daoist Xue doesn’t appear to have the cultivation required to maintain the formation!” Crooked Soul calmly asked, sitting down without any further decorum.

Feng Sanniang smiled before giving an explanation, “There is still Shiftery Island’s Fellow Daoist Dou. However, he is currently cultivating a ferocious technique and hasn’t left his room in the past few days.”

“Oh, so it was like that!” Crooked Soul nodded his head and

didn't say anything further.

But as Feng Sanniang was quite curious about Crooked Soul, she would occasionally ask him a few irrelevant questions. Han Li, who stood behind Crooked Soul, found this somewhat surprising as he didn't know what the woman intended.

When she asked whether or not Crooked Soul comprehended the "Six Flowing Ripples Magic Formation", Han Li willed Crooked Soul to reply that he did not.

The woman smiled, stating that neither did the others. Then, she began to give the three present cultivators an explanation of its wondrous intricacies.

It was truly surprising; Feng Sanniang was a rarely seen formation spell expert!

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Although the middle-aged Confucian scholar had a problem with the others, he eventually returned to the main hall the next day to hear about the important aspects for maintaining the formation. After all, the Six United Palaces had invited him to come, and it would be unbecoming for him to shirk his responsibilities!

Three days later, the remaining cultivator ended his seclusion in his room, allowing Han Li to finally see him. He was a bulky, seven-foot tall man with a fierce-looking face. Although his

appearance seemed violent, he was an outspoken and frank person that quickly formed a close relationship with the others.

With their final member present, Han Li and company finished listening to Feng Sanniang's explanation on the profound intricacies of the spell formation. Afterwards, their ship would often stop, and they would fly around the nearby seas, continuously practicing the shifting forms of the "Six Flowing Ripples Formation". This way, they would succeed on their first attempt to capture the demon beast when the time came. Everyone was satisfied with this arrangement.

As such, the ship naturally slowed down, but the Six United Palaces didn't seem impatient at all. Even with the constant stops, Feng Sanniang maintained her beaming smile and didn't show the slightest impatience.

When the formation spell transformations were finally practiced to perfection, Feng Sanniang no longer delayed their journey and had the ship continue on at full speed. One month later, the ship arrived at a nameless, desolate island.

Led by Feng Sanniang, Han Li and company descended from the ship.

Just as they stepped onto the small island, a blinding golden light flew down from the sky, and several people were suddenly hovering above them. Once the light faded away, an old man whose face had a dim, golden sheen expressionlessly glanced at them.

This person lacked any noticeable magic power fluctuations despite obviously not being a mortal, it seemed he was able to restrain his unfathomably deep magic power with ease. The appearance of such an expert caused Han Li's heart to tremble.

Feng Sanniang stepped forward without hesitation and deeply bowed to the old man and spoke with an expression of respect, "Subordinate Feng Sanniang pays her respects to Elder Miao!"

At that moment, Han Li and the others standing behind her paid their respects as well. They obviously couldn't afford to slight a Core Formation cultivator.

With a calm expression, the old man slowly said, "There is no need to be so polite! Feng Sanniang, you did quite well. You've managed to bring these assistants very quickly! Are they familiar with the formation spell drills? The demonic beast we're dealing with is quite troublesome, and we cannot be careless!"

"Elder, be at ease. Everyone has already fully mastered the many variations of the Six Flowing Ripples Formation. We will definitely be able to trap the beast!" Feng Sanniang voice brimmed with confidence.

Elder Miao swept his gaze over the Foundation Establishment cultivators. He then said in a friendly manner, "Good! Fellow Daoists, our Six United Palaces require your assistance. So long as you properly exert yourself, we will treat you fairly without a doubt."

Without waiting for the others to speak, the middle-aged Confucian scholar rushed to speak with an ingratiating smile, “Be at ease, Senior. We will definitely try our best!”

Although the others revealed odd expressions upon seeing the Confucian-scholar’s flattery, they could only express their mutual agreement.

Satisfied with their responses, Elder Miao nodded his head and said, “We’ve already placed down the formation several days ago. You will only have to maintain it. As for Elder Gu, he is in the nearby seas chasing after the demon beast, and I will be joining him after this. I reckon by tomorrow morning, we will be able to draw the beast into the formation and you all will be able to display your skill. You should rest on the island until then.”

Elder Miao then turned into a streak of gold light and flew into the sky, disappearing without a trace in the blink of an eye.

Feng Sanniang turned her head over, speaking with a solemn voice, “Fellow Daoists, you’ve heard Elder Miao. Let’s rest for the day and properly prepare ourselves for the hard battle coming tomorrow.”

The others naturally didn’t contest this and nodded their heads.

But at this moment, Qing Suanzi, who seldom spoke on the journey, suddenly said with a stiff voice, “Fellow Daoist Feng, we’ve all asked what kind of demon beast we would be dealing

with along the way. In the end, you never clearly answered us. But now that we will act tomorrow, will you finally give us a clear answer?”

The old man’s question stirred the hearts of the others, bringing all of their questioning gazes upon Feng Sanniang.

This demon beast was apparently terrible and rarely seen, even requiring great efforts and long planning from the Six United Palaces. This definitely wasn’t some ordinary grade six demon beast!

Chapter 380: Infant Carp Beast

When Feng Sanniang heard this, she revealed a bitter smile. She dragged the hair on her forehead to one side and slowly said, “Fellow Daoists! It wasn’t that I was unwilling to state the facts. I was under orders to not divulge this information until we arrived on the island. Now that we’ve arrived, I have no restrictions in telling you all! The foe that our United Six Palaces wish to battle is an ‘Infant Carp Beast’. That is why we had to be a bit careful!”

“Infant Carp Beast!” When Qing Suanzi heard this, he couldn’t help but shout out in shock!

Han Li detachedly gazed on. Although he didn’t know what sort of demon beast they were facing, judging by the pale expressions of the others, it was by no means some trifling beast.

“I don’t blame your palaces for being this careful. If it really is this demon beast, it was right to be careful! If other powers were to know of this, who knows how much of a disturbance would be brought about!!” Qing Suanzi muttered in disbelief. Han Li’s heart stirred upon hearing him.

The youth surnamed Yan and the large bald man’s expressions continuously shifted as their hearts were in turmoil.

Only the middle-aged Confucian scholar with an unsightly expression coldly spoke to Feng Sanniang, “Your Six United Palaces have overreached themselves! Everyone knows that the Infant Carp Beast is an innate water demon beast with formidable

water type divine abilities. If it were grade six, it'd be a match for common grade seven demon beasts. By claiming it to be a grade six beast when you were asking for our assistance, were you deliberately trying to take advantage of us?" The middle-aged Confucian scholar asked.

Qing Suanzi and the others eventually recovered from their shock, all revealing their displeasure.

Although they were all rogue cultivators, those that walked the road less traveled, they didn't dare to rashly offend the Six United Palaces. They all wordlessly stared at Feng Sanniang, waiting for an answer.

Feng Sanniang's face darkened and she replied without a trace of politeness, "Fellow Daoist Mao, you speak wrongly! Our Six United Palaces did not deceive you! Although the Infant Carp Beast is a bit difficult, it is a genuine grade six demon beast. How could you say we called a grade seven demon beast a grade six demon beast? Besides, since our palaces offered a reward as precious as the Dustfall Pill, you should have understood that you weren't going to deal with a common grade six beast. Otherwise, our palaces would be operating at a loss."

The middle-aged Confucian scholar was left dumbstruck for long while, and Han Li inwardly frowned. Although the woman's outspoken words held reason, he still felt very uncomfortable and couldn't help but glance at the others.

The other three appeared to have the same attitude as Han Li and revealed slight displeasure.

Then, Feng Sanniang suddenly flashed Crooked Soul a smile and said, “Naturally, our palace acted in this manner to ensure that the existence of the Infant Carp Beast is kept hidden. As a result, arrangements were made before we came here. In addition to the Dustfall Pill you will receive after this matter is concluded, you will all be paid an advance of a thousand spirit stones as compensation for keeping the matter secret. Is this to your satisfaction?”

Everyone’s resentment had slowly faded away, and they each nodded their heads in agreement.

The middle-aged man still seemed somewhat unsatisfied, but his young, beautiful Dao companion then whispered something into his ear. His expression changed, and he kept silent.

Soon after, everyone went off in their own direction on the island and found a quiet location to meditate and rest. Han Li and Crooked Soul found a huge reef near the ocean shore and sat down cross-legged while facing each other.

Under Han Li’s meticulous commands, Crooked Soul quickly entered a state of strength honing. As for Han Li, he slowly closed his eyes, wishing to meditate. But after the the time it took to make a cup of tea, Han Li opened his eyes with a frown. He then looked at the surging waves while lost in thought.

For some unknown reason, he felt somewhat ill at ease, as if something incredible was about to occur. After pondering in restless apprehension for a long while, he helplessly smiled as he

was unable to single out the cause.

He was still quite nervous. Although a spirited rest was normally easy to come by, he would be assisting two Core Formation cultivators with the Six Flowing Ripples Formation tomorrow. Although the demon beast seemed quite unordinary, a demon beast was still a demon beast. Facing against cultivators of superior strength, how could it possibly prevail? They shouldn't have any problem taking it down.

After calming himself down with a few comforting words, Han Li attempted to forcefully enter meditation. But after a while, his heart still felt heavy, and he was unable to get into the mood.

Han Li sighed and stood up, it seemed that unless he did something, he wouldn't feel at ease!

Han Li helplessly looked around and released his spiritual sense. Fortunately, there was nobody around.

Han Li quickly patted his storage pouch and took out over a dozen sparkling formation flags and six formation plates, the formation setup tool set for the Jadewater Azure Armor Formation.

Although this formation couldn't be compared to the Five Elements Reversal Formation or the Six Flowing Ripples Formation, it was still far stronger than common magic formations. In addition, it was extremely simple to setup due to its tools.

Han Li called out to Crooked Soul without the slightest hesitation and had him use the reef as the formation's center, setting up the rest of the formation flags and disks within a hundred meters of it.

As he watched Crooked Soul placing down the flags and burying the formation disks, Han Li felt his anxiety gradually dissipate. He couldn't help but make a slanted smile and self-mockingly say, "It seems I am still quite fearful of death!"

...

The next day before the sunrise, Feng Sanniang and the others gathered together, flying over five kilometers to sea.

At this same moment, in the waters five hundred kilometers away, a streak of gold light and a streak of yellow light were quickly flying in the direction of the nameless small island.

A kilometer behind them, there was a large white mist spanning about four hundred meters chasing after them at the same speed while faintly releasing an infant's cry. Anybody who heard the miserable wail would feel their blood run cold.

"Elder Miao, should I send a flying sword over to them and see if they're prepared?" A deep voice suddenly came from the rushing yellow light.

"Sure!" Elder Miao agreed without hesitation. His body blurred

and reappeared at the center of the yellow light. At the same time, the golden light enveloping him turned into a golden rainbow and disappeared in an instant.

The huge white mist chasing after them appeared upset by this and the infant's weeping became even more intense. The sound gradually changed to that of thunder and became increasingly deafening.

“Not good! The beast is going to use Divine Waterstar Thunder! Elder Brother Gu, please hurry!” Elder Miao, now enveloped by the yellow light, shouted out as if he were greatly fearful of the sounds of thunder from behind them.

“Be at ease. My Immemorial Bowl isn't slow in the slightest!” Just as the deep voice said this, the yellow light sped up and greatly increased the distance between them and the white mist in an instant. However, the white mist seemed unwilling to give up. With sounds of wailing and thunder, it also sped up, cutting through the seawater and spreading huge white waves across the ocean as far as the eye could see.

...

Crooked Soul and company had already taken their positions at the formation's front, each holding a large blue flag in their hand. The banner was about six meters long and emitted threads of dazzling blue radiance.

The six late Foundation Establishment cultivators wore solemn

expressions and were separated by over four hundred meters as they floated above the sea on magic tools, forming a hollow semicircle.

Han Li stood behind Crooked Soul with a detached gaze. As for the middle-aged Confucian scholar's Dao companion, she stood at his side with a concerned expression.

A short moment later, a streak of golden light suddenly cleaved through the sky and arrived in Feng Sanniang's hand, drawing the attention of the others.

"Everyone, on guard! The Infant Carp Beast is about to come! Once the beast enters the formation, immediately block off the entrance of the formation!" Feng Sanniang received the message and loudly shouted to the others with a solemn expression. Afterwards, the golden light flew away and disappeared off into the sky.

Han Li's heart tensed, and he attentively stared in the direction that the golden light flew off into.

The others also wore taut expressions as if they were anticipating the storm that was about to come.

After an unknown amount of time passed, they heard faint rolls of thunder in the distance that soon grew increasingly louder. They eventually spotted a streak of yellow and a streak of golden light flying towards them at the speed of lightning. A huge white mist followed behind them as if it were closely pursuing them.

“That’s the Infant Carp Beast?” Although Han Li could clearly see a huge white mist behind the streaks, he couldn’t imagine the sinister appearance of the demon beast concealed within.

Chapter 381: Rare Treasures Conquer The Demon

“Initiate the spell formation!” Feng Sanniang loudly yelled as she waved the blue banner in her hands, causing blue circular ripples to suddenly flow from the banner.

The others followed suit, silently waving their formation flags. In an instant, a blue brilliance enveloped all of them. After several flashes of light, they all disappeared without a trace. From a distance, only an empty sea could be seen where they once were.

A moment later, two streaks of light flew past this area without any intention of slowing down as if they were truly fleeing for their lives. The white mist behind them closely followed after them without a single shred of doubt.

As soon as the white mist flew into range of the magic formation, it was surrounded by a drizzle of blue radiance and a huge barrier of blue light appeared out of nowhere, trapping it within. At this moment, Feng Sanniang and the others all appeared around the barrier.

They all had their flags lifted high and pointed at the light barrier, shooting out blue light beams with the thickness of a bowl. As the huge light barrier absorbed the beams, its shine became increasingly brighter and its color became deeper.

After this occurred, the yellow and golden streaks of light immediately flew to above the light barrier. The light then faded

away to reveal Elder Miao and burly man with long, messy hair.

“Good, well done! Next, you must withstand the beast’s counterattack and allow us to use this opportunity to take it out with our rare treasures!” Elder Miao shouted out with a joyful expression.

After a mutual glance with Elder Gu, the two each reached for their chest and took out a pair of ancient, worn copper longspear. Other than their dull, shineless tips, there was nothing else of note.

The two Core Formation elders of the Six United Palaces grew solemn and started muttering to themselves. The longspear then floated away from their grasps and released a yellow glow that gradually grew brighter.

At that moment, the Infant Carp Beast seemed to realize it was trapped. After a series of mournful infant cries, the huge, three-hundred-meter wide white mist suddenly shrank back towards its center. In the blink of an eye, it shrank to about forty meters, forming a milky-white barrier of mist.

At the same time, thunderous wails came from the mist and momentarily turned into a single cry, deafening the cultivators surrounding the formation and causing them to feel alarmed.

After the infant’s wails suddenly stopped, countless, fist-sized spheres of blue light shot out from the mist, launching an overbearing assault against the blue light barrier. The fierce

momentum of the attack caused everyone's heart to skip a beat!

When the light spheres were thirty meters away from the barrier, they released shining azure clouds. A fraction of the light spheres flashed within their clouds and faded away, only to appear again above the white mist. Afterwards, it struck down; a portion of these attacks had actually returned, dodging away from the formation spell.

However, the light spheres were truly great in number, and a majority of them managed to strike the blue barrier.

Suddenly, both the blue light barrier and the white mist violently erupted with white radiance, but the white mist's light disappeared with a single flash. As for the light barrier, its walls were shaking. The blue and white light flickered, interweaving with one another as if the light barrier were about to collapse.

“Everyone, quickly use more magic power! This is one of the Infant Carp Beast's killing moves, Divine Waterstar Thunder. We only have to persist for a few minutes more!” Feng Sanniang shouted out with a flustered expression. She then took the initiative to say an incantation and spurted out some blood essence towards the banner in her hand. Its blue light flourished, releasing a light beam several times thicker than its original which immediately steadied the light barrier.

When the others saw this, they could only perform their own techniques to draw the entirety of their body's magic power to forcefully support the formation.

Han Li was somewhat surprised. He hadn't expected that the infant carp beast would so quickly fight with all its might. This demon beast's ferociousness was truly beyond reason!

Up above the magic formation, the two Core Formation cultivator's copper spears began a strange transformation. As they were chanting a mysterious incantation with solemn expressions, the yellow light emitted from the spears grew larger inch by inch, and the long spears started to point down towards the center of the white mist.

The Infant Carp Beast within the white mist seemed to sense the danger that was above it and suddenly released a deafening cry.

The white mist gradually rotated at increasingly faster speeds. After a short moment, it had formed a huge whirlwind and swept up a huge torrent of water. The tempest also carried bits of blue radiance, extremely dangerous units of Divine Waterstar Thunder.

Qing Suanzi and company became aghast at the sight and couldn't help but nervously glance at Feng Sanniang. However, she appeared equivalently terrified and didn't seem to know what astonishing magic technique the Infant Carp Beast had used.

Han Li's expression became gloomy as he silently ordered Crooked Soul to send the entirety of his magic power into the formation. Although he didn't know what divine ability the Infant Carp Beast had used, it appeared that the attack would free the demon beast.

With that in mind, Han Li couldn't help but look towards the sky and saw that the two long spears had already become about thirty meters long, faintly releasing a clear, pleasant ring.

The two Core Formation elders then formed a strange hand incantation while rigidly staring at the huge spears. Their initial incantation still continued on as their expressions became intense and their foreheads were faintly laden with sweat.

As the bewildering cries of the beast continued, the huge, white-blue tempest suddenly collided against the light barrier like an overbearing strike of lightning. As it was over a hundred meters tall, it carried an astonishing pressure.

The faces of the middle-aged Confucian scholar and the young woman by his side paled as if they were drained of blood. As the direction of this fearsome attack was towards his corner of the formation, he couldn't help but inwardly complain without end.

He helplessly gritted his teeth and enveloped his body in a dazzling barrier interwoven with both yellow and blue radiance. Afterwards, he rigidly held onto the formation flag and poured the entirety of his spiritual power into the flagpole, causing the flag to shoot out a light beam that was many times thicker than before. Just as this happened, the huge tempest struck the barrier, losing its momentum and seeming to have no effect.

Suddenly, sounds of thunder, cries, and rupture suddenly rang out. The light barrier only managed to endure for a short moment

before collapsing amongst the beast's dreadful wails.

Crooked Soul and the other cultivators maintaining the formation all displayed shock and spit out a mouthful of blood.

When the middle-aged Confucian scholar had spit out blood, his Dao companion wordlessly dragged him off, escaping to an area about a hundred meters away.

Just as the great formation ruptured and the Foundation Establishment cultivators paled, a furious shout echoed from the skies, "Evil Beast, accept your death!"

Immediately after this was spoken, two huge yellow streaks of light struck down like bolts of lightning into the huge tempest. With a loud, mournful infant's wail, the sea abruptly became deathly quiet, and the mist gradually dispersed to reveal the true body of the Infant Carp Beast. As for the two copper spears, they had returned to their original form, and their flashes of yellow light reflected against the sea as they were nailed into the beast's body.

Han Li quickly had Crooked Soul take out a mid-grade spirit stone and recover his magic power without delay as he brought his attention to down below.

The Infant Carp Beast appeared extremely strange. It had the head of a young infant with the body and tail of a blue carp. There were also four smooth, white human arms growing from its lower body as well as two huge fins that seemed to act as wings.

But what was most strange was that its four arms each held a distinct item: a huge crabs' claw, a meter long stick of coral, a white, egg-sized pearl, and a silver, shield-like clamshell. From a single glance at the items' shining appearance, one could tell they were precious items.

The beast's infant head appeared to have an expression of anguish as if it were still screaming. Once Han Li saw the lines of sharp teeth in its open mouth, he felt aghast.

As for its three-meter-long carp body, it continuously flailed about, wanting to escape from the two copper spears that pierced it.

However, the two copper spears seemed to be innately baneful to demon beasts. Regardless of how much it struggled, the spears remained rigidly nailed into the still water. It seemed almost as if they were eating away at the beast.

The two Core Formation elders that threw the copper spears appeared just as exhausted as Han Li and the others. It was obvious that releasing these two rare treasures had somewhat damaged their Origin Qi. However, they still flew over with an expression of intense ecstasy. The other Foundation Establishment cultivators couldn't help but stare at the Infant Carp Beast with greed. But when they spotted Feng Sanniang eying them like a tiger watching its prey, they completely relinquished any intentions of greed, swallowing their mouthfuls of saliva, and glancing at the two spears that extinguished the beast.

The two Core Formation cultivators excitedly flew over. But when they were only about a hundred meters away from the Infant Carp Beast, an evil wind that was black as ink suddenly blew from underneath the demon beast. A kilometer of the sea's surface condensed into a shining white ball of ice with the beast at its center before soaring towards the sky and pouncing downward onto the Core Formation cultivators. This abrupt and unexpected event left everyone stunned!

Chapter 382: Wu Chou

“Profound Devil Yin Qi!” The Core Formation elders seemed to have recognized this black aura and shouted out in alarm. They quickly flew away as if they had seen a venomous scorpion.

The black aura didn’t pursue them and sank back into the ocean like a hissing snake, condensing into a black whirlwind at the side of the ice sphere containing the Infant Carp Beast.

The black wind gradually stopped to reveal a man and two women. The man was short, shriveled, thin, and had a young, black-pocked face. The women were well-endowed, gorgeous, and wearing a sleeveless short-skirt. However, they were enveloped with a dark, cold evil aura.

The two women were only late Foundation Establishment cultivators. Han Li was unable to see through the the grotesque, shriveled youth’s cultivation, and he was sure to be a Core Formation Cultivator.

Elder Miao clearly recognized this man and in his rage, he spoke near-incoherently, “Wu [Chou](#)! What are you doing? Could it be you wish to go to war with our Six United Palaces?”

丑 Chou can mean ugly as he is described. Also describes certain Q.I. thieves.

The shriveled youth spoke with great arrogance, “War? This young master has no such interest! But as my Clan’s Ancestry is leaving seclusion from the ocean’s depth, this Infant Carp Beast’s

demon core will be my congratulatory gift to him!”

“Martial Ancestor Zenith Yin is leaving seclusion?” The youth’s words greatly frightened the Six United Palaces, and they looked at each other in dismay.

When the other nearby cultivators heard this, their faces became deathly pale; even the rather haughty middle-aged Confucian scholar trembled in terror.

When Han Li saw this, he felt amazed! This “Martial Ancestor Zenith Yin” actually had such a large reputation? But what he was most curious about was the faint feeling of familiarity towards the youth’s evil aura.

After a moment of thought, Han Li felt that the “Divine Blood Light” that the Emperor of Yue and Crooked Soul cultivated felt rather similar to the shriveled youth’s, although theirs are much weaker. He couldn’t help but think of the “Profound Yin Scripture” that was mentioned in the gray jade slip.

Han Li mused, ‘Could it have some relation to this Profound Yin Devil Qi?’

Before Han Li could ponder any further, Elder Miao loudly reproached, “Wu Chou, you talk big! Did that matter of life and death seclusion a hundred years ago allow him to make a huge breakthrough? Don’t tell me that your ancestor became mid Nascent Soul Stage during that time!”

When Wu Chou heard this, he howled with laughter.

“Hehe, your Six United Palaces are truly ignorant! Who told you that my clan’s ancestor entered cultivation to reach mid Nascent Soul Stage? My ancestor entered seclusion to cultivate a peerless Devil Art. He only left seclusion because he had reached the great success stage in the technique!” Wu Chou stated proudly.

Elder Miao and Gu appeared stupefied, not knowing whether he was speaking truth or lies.

“Since you now know of my Clan Ancestor’s fame, this young master will be taking the Infant Carp beast. Surely there is no way that your Six United Palaces won’t give our Zenith Yin Island face!” Wu Chou sinisterly said as he gazed at their expressions.

Upon hearing his infuriating words, Elder Miao’s face paled, and Elder Gu’s eyes flickered when he thought of something, but the both of them remained silent.

As for the others, they couldn’t help but take a few steps back, not wishing to become mixed up in this mess.

When Feng Sanniang saw this, she frowned helplessly. Everyone here had been invited to deal with a demon beast; they weren’t subordinates of the Six United Palaces. Under this current situation, the Six United Palaces truly found themselves at a disadvantage.

Although the Six United Palaces had two initial Foundation Establishment cultivators, their origin Qi had been greatly damaged by activating the ancient rare treasures, the Opposing Heaven Spears”. Although the youth, Wu Chou, was also an early Core Formation cultivator, he cultivated the finest Devil Art in the Scattered Star Seas, the “Profound Yin Art”. He was far above common Core Formation cultivators!

Moreover, he had the backing of Martial Ancestor Zenith Yin, an Evil Devil Lord known to all of the Scattered Star Seas that nobody dared to lightly provoke!

But to have Wu Chou to take away the Infant Carp Beast before their eyes was a huge loss of face for the Six United Palaces. Not only would the entirety of their efforts be in vain, but they would also appear weak and easily bullied, stifling the future growth of the Six United Palaces.

At this moment, Elder Gu and Elder Miao started to have a silent discussion and their expressions continuously alternated between clear and gloomy.

Wu Chou coldly snorted and arrogantly walked to the side of the Infant Carp Beast. His hand flashed with black radiance and a pitch-black devilish saber appeared in his hand.

After chopping the demon beast’s strange head open with his saber, he searched through the head for the demon core without any restraint. As for the two women, they vigilantly watched Elder Miao and Gu in the sky.

Feng Sanniang's face became extremely unsightly, but since Elder Miao and Gu still hadn't said anything, she didn't dare to act.

Han Li and the others silently gazed on, not daring to say a word. They were fearful of inviting disaster upon themselves.

Not longer after, Wu Chou fished out a jade-blue sphere from the demon beast's head with his face full of delight. But his gaze then turned to the four wondrous items that were held in the demon beast's limbs and he wore an averous expression.

But just as he lifted his devilish saber, Elder Gu stopped him, speaking with a deep voice, "Young island lord, your ancestor could be said to have a relationship of old friendship with our palaces. You can take the Infant Carp Beast's other items. However, our Six United Palaces requires the demon core. We must take it back or else we will not return." Elder Gu spoke with an indifferent tone, showing not the slightest emotion.

When Wu Chou heard this, he coldly laughed and continued to chop down, ignoring his words. Breaking the demon beast's grasp, he tightly gripped the blue coral in his hands.

Having seen this, Elder Gu revealed a softer expression and sighed, helplessly transmitting his voice towards Wu Chou.

Upon hearing him, Wu Chou suddenly halted his saber and revealed an expression of astonishment. He lowered the devilish saber in his hands and opened and closed his mouth in disbelief as

though he wanted to say something. Elder Gu then expressionlessly said a few additional words.

This strange scene was completely baffling to Han Li and the others. As for elder Miao, he expressionlessly floated in the air and turned a blind eye to what was happening.

“I don’t believe you! Give me evidence of your status!” Wu Chou suddenly shook his head and coldly shouted.

It’s unclear whether or not it was deliberate, but he suddenly shouted this out without using a voice transfer technique. When Han Li and the others heard this, they couldn’t help but feel puzzled. After giving each other a mutual glance, Elder Gu and Miao revealed a furious expression.

“Fine, here is proof of our status!” With an ice-cold expression, he waved his arm and released a black light. Wu Chou caught it without any effort.

Han Li attentively gazed at this with a thumping heart, but he was only able to clearly see the item by relying on his powerful spiritual sense. It was a command medallion carved and painted in the shape of a malevolent ghost head that released a faint black Qi. After carefully examining it, Wu Chou seemed to recognize it.

Han Li’s heart thumped, and he faintly felt a foreboding premonition. He hastily turned his head around, but what he saw left him fearful.

The others appeared bewildered and were glancing at the actions of the three Core Formation cultivators. However, Qing Suanzi's face appeared deathly white and he started to fall back with tightened fists in complete silence. In the blink of an eye, he was already a hundred meters away.

When he saw Han Li looking at him, he was initially startled before revealing an unsightly, bitter smile. Afterwards, he wordlessly transformed into an azure streak, fleeing away at the greatest speed he could muster.

This sight caused Han Li's heart to sink! He instantly reacted, patting his storage pouch and hastily withdrawing his Divine Wind Boat. After dragging Crooked Soul onto the magic tool, he soon turned into a streak of white light and hastily fled in the direction of the small, unnamed island.

Qing Suanzi's and Han Li's strange actions left Feng Sanniang and the other cultivators stunned, feeling great bafflement.

When Elder Gu and Miao saw this, they revealed cold expressions. Elder Gu then sinisterly said, "We will take responsibility to kill the two that fled. Elder Brother Wu, I will leave the rest to you!"

Without waiting for Wu Chou's response, Elder Gu and Miao turned into two streaks of light, disappearing without a trace in the direction of Han Li and Qing Suanzi.

Wu Chou coldly snorted. Although he appeared unwilling, he

gazed at the bewildered Foundation Establishment cultivators with killing intent.

“Humph! You all sure aren’t lucky, having witnessed something you shouldn’t have! Now, this young master will be taking your souls!” Wu Chou spread open his arms and covered the nearby sky and earth with a black, evil wind in an instant, the astonishingly dense pressure instantly engulfing Feng Sanniang and the others.

Chapter 383: Fighting Against Core Formation

Propelled by Han Li's late Foundation Establishment cultivation, the already fast Divine Wind Boat was like an arrow loosed from a bow, piercing through the very air itself.

When Han Li saw that the reef was a short distance away, he inwardly sighed in relief. But when he turned his head to wipe away his sweat, he felt his blood run cold and heard something coming from behind him.

During his shock, Han Li instantly reacted, stamping down on his Divine Wind Boat and causing it to strafe to the side. An instant later, the Divine Wind Boat was already about forty meters away.

At nearly the same time, a deep yellow streak of light passed through the location where Han Li had just been. About a hundred meters away, the yellow light stopped, fading away to reveal a silhouette.

Han Li wiped away his sticky, cold sweat and looked at this person with a bitter smile.

The person before him had long, messy hair. He was the the Six United Palace's Elder Gu!

At that moment, Elder Gu stamped his foot onto an earth-yellow, disc magic treasure and silently glanced at him with a gaze beyond

cold as if Han Li were already a dead man in his eyes.

As for the formation that Han Li had placed down, it was forty meters behind him, much to Han Li's shock.

However, Han Li clearly understood that any questions or pleas of mercy now would be in vain. He could only risk his life against this Core Formation "Senior" and see whether or not there would be an opportunity to use the formation spell to trap him.

With that thought, Han Li's heart became resolute and he gave orders to Crooked Soul. Crooked Soul blurred and moved to block Han Li's front. At this same moment, his body released a faint blood-red light along with the scent of blood. As for Han Li, his hands shined with light, revealing two magic tools in his grasp.

Seeing that Han Li and Crooked Soul wished to stubbornly resist, Elder Gu's eyes shined with an ominous glint before causing the disc magic treasure beneath him to release a long cry. The disc then shined with yellow radiance and enveloped his entire body in yellow light like an armor.

Afterwards, Elder Gu suddenly raised his arms, silently shooting out a swarm of palm-sized blades of crescent light towards Han Li and Crooked Soul.

While Han Li felt greatly alarmed, he also felt relief. His magic treasure was only as fast as the attacks of Lei Wanhe that Han Li had previously witnessed, giving Han Li the opportunity to save his own life.

Han Li's consciousness surged, and he raised his hands. With one hand, he threw out a huge, enlarged tortoise shell. In the other, he held a sparkling small mirror that directly spouted out a mist of azure light towards the incoming light blades.

An unbroken succession of booms rang out. The front portion of the light blades slowed down under the effects of the azure light mist. But as soon as the rest of the blades entered the azure light, the azure light shattered and fragmented into bits of starlight.

Crack. At this same moment, the mirror in Han Li's hand cracked into two, becoming unusable.

Han Li threw away the Azure Stasis Mirror without the slightest lament and patted his storage pouch without moving his gaze, releasing two streaks of black light and five streaks of white light from his storage pouch. After the streaks made a half revolution around him, they orderly flew out.

This still wasn't enough for Han Li. Another eight flashes of white light surrounded him, revealing four puppet soldiers to either side of him. They drew their bows, ready to take action.

Then, the swarm of light blades struck the tortoise shell. In the instant that they made contact, countless deep scars immediately appeared on the shell. After merely a few short moments, the tortoise shell released a wail and was cleaved into countless pieces by the swarm of light blades.

With the time this bought, Han Li's seven top-grade magic tools had arrived in front of Crooked Soul and continuously revolved around him, forming a black-white barrier of light streaks.

Naturally, these top grade magic tools were also incapable of withstanding the weakened light blade attacks. The Black Dragon Claws and the five white flying blades twinkled as they revolved, merely becoming fireflies.

Without anything to block the swarm of crescent light blades, they chopped towards Crooked Soul who stood motionlessly in front of Han Li.

“HAH!” Crooked Soul suddenly let out a world-shaking roar, shedding off the blood-red light that surrounded his body. In the blink of an eye, the light turned into a huge red flood dragon, charging forward with brandished claws and bared fangs.

Just as the red light and the light blades collided, the puppet soldiers at Han Li's side released their light arrows for a timely addition to the flood dragon's attack, causing a momentary deadlock.

Han Li was ecstatic at how the event had played out, but Elder Gu revealed astonishment.

But soon after, the Core Formation cultivator snorted with disdain and raised his hands as a burst of yellow radiance flourished from behind him.

When Han Li saw this, he grew alarmed, as he had spent most of his precious magic tools blocking the last wave of attacks. If his enemy were to unleash another wave of incisive attacks, he would surely meet his end!

While Han Li was lost in fear, the sneering Core Formation cultivator's complexion suddenly changed. Perhaps due to heavenly intervention, his cheeks flushed with an abnormal shade of red before soon turning pale. Afterwards, the yellow light behind his body dimmed, and his trembling body doubled over from pain.

Elder Gu suddenly felt furious alarm! He was well aware that this was caused by the rash use of his true origin despite not recovering from the earlier damage to his Origin Qi. However, he only needed to suppress his injuries for a moment more to easily get rid of Han Li.

This turn of events left Han Li wild with joy! He instantly reacted, taking advantage of this opportunity by grabbing Crooked Soul and then flying down towards the nameless island at the speed of lightning, leaving behind the flood dragon and puppet soldiers as he was unable to retrieve them in time.

Elder Gu was furious with embarrassment! If he truly allowed Han Li to escape from his hand, he would be made a fool of! Vexed, he could only allow his injuries to somewhat worsen. Gritting his teeth, he made use of his entire body's spiritual power and forcefully suppressed his injuries before he resolutely chased after Han Li as a streak of blinding yellow light.

Flying at great speed, Han Li managed to travel a hundred meters in an instant. Just as he stepped into the perimeter of the spell formation, the yellow streak of light chased after him, nearly entering the formation at the same time.

Just as Elder Gu smirked while thinking he would be able to kill the two in one blow, his eyes suddenly flashed with light and he saw a huge change of scenery. The nameless island was nowhere to be seen and he found himself above a huge jade sea with an immense pressure holding him in place.

“Formation Spell?” Elder Gu’s expression grew solemn.

Although he was somewhat shocked as to why there was a formation spell here, he didn’t feel any panic. After all, the nearby fluctuations of the formation spell indicated it wasn’t some impressive grand formation. He was confident he’d be able to break through it with ease.

With that thought, Elder Gu’s expression grew cold, and his body shone with dazzling yellow light.

Naturally, what Han Li saw in his Jadewater Azure Armor Formation was completely different than what his Core Formation “Senior” saw. After flashing forward a few times on his Divine Wind Boat, he easily left the great formation.

With thoughts of fleeing to as far away as possible, Han Li turned his head towards the formation.

Han Li's expression became gloomy. He saw Elder Gu transform into a yellow bolt of lightning, wildly striking against the formation spell's restrictions. As Han Li saw that he was about to break through, Han Li's expression continuously alternated between clear and gloomy.

If Han Li were to flee, his pursuer would escape and give chase once more. Given the great discrepancy in speed between his pursuer's magic treasure and his Divine Wind Boat, he'd definitely be chased down.

As Han Li hesitated, several layers of the formation spell's restrictions were broken through.

Having then come to a decision, Han Li's eyes flashed with killing intent. He called out to Crooked Soul without hesitation and stealthily approached Elder Gu under the cover of the spell formation.

But as they were approaching Elder Gu, their target seemed to sense something as he was unbridledly breaking through the spell formation. Elder Gu suddenly stopped and vigilantly looked around with a stern expression.

Han Li wrinkled his brow. A small, azure flag then appeared into his hand with a flash of light: the formation's master control flag.

After whispering an indiscernible incantation, Han Li suddenly tossed the flag. The flag turned into a streak of azure light, merging with the formation.

Afterwards, the scene before Elder Gu's eyes changed once more. He was now surrounded by a surging storm, and the original six hundred kilograms of pressure suppressing him suddenly multiplied, causing his body to feel sluggish.

Chapter 384: Beheading The Superior

While the Core Formation cultivator's body was slowed by the formation, a dozen translucent white ice spears shot out of the seawater behind him.

Suddenly, Elder Gu's sluggish body became nimble once more. He managed to turn around and raise his hand, shooting out a huge yellow crescent. In the blink of an eye, he completely smashed the ice spears, but without the slightest delay, an ice snake shot out from another direction to strike him.

Simultaneously, the seawater behind Elder Gu parted to reveal a blood-red beam of light. As the light beam was shot from a close range and traveled too quickly, Elder Gu was unable to dodge in time while under the formation spells restrictions. He could only grimace and envelope his body with yellow radiance in an attempt to block the attacks.

The arm-thick, blood-red light beam struck, causing Elder Gu to stumble forward and somewhat lose his balance. At the same time, there was a flash of azure light from his side, suddenly revealing Han Li fiercely chopping down with a huge azure sword in his hands.

Elder Gu was greatly alarmed. There was clearly no one there before! What movement technique could be this strange?

Although he felt astonished, he instantly reacted, causing his body's yellow light to suddenly surge in order to block Han Li's

huge sword.

Han Li chuckled and disappeared from sight. Then, Elder Gu heard sounds of breaking wind around him and saw over ten red threads stabbing towards him.

“Flying needles!” Elder Gu was aghast! He naturally knew much of these “Hidden Weapons” famed among the cultivation world. His body’s yellow light brightly shined as if attempting to destroy the insidious magic tools, unwittingly falling into Han Li’s trap.

“BANG!” Han Li had reappeared behind him and swung down, causing the yellow radiance to sway. The dozen red threads then bizarrely drilled into his yellow radiance like snakes. In a single second, they pierced through a meter and still continued to fiercely bore deeper.

With furious alarm, Elder Gu’s eyes coldly glinted and he reached for his storage pouch. He realized that with their spell formation and strange attacks along with the great damage to his Origin Qi he previously suffered, it would be difficult to prevail.

But without waiting for him to take something out, two thumb-thick streaks of blood-red light appeared in front of him, shooting towards his body with extreme incisiveness.

Having suffered Han Li’s attack and being trapped by the flying needles, the yellow radiance of his body had greatly weakened, allowing the unremarkable streaks of blood-red light to pierce through his yellow radiance.

Elder Gu's face grew deathly pale! But as a Core Formation cultivator, feeling dread as he felt the blood-red streak pierce through his yellow radiance and being unable to take out any of his treasures, he suddenly exerted the entirety of his body's strength to dodge.

An instant later, both of the blood-red streaks of light struck. One of the streaks brushed past his ear, taking away a majority of its flesh. As for the other, although it missed any of his vital regions, it left a small hole with blood spurting out of his shoulder. Elder Gu then shouted in pain as his knees buckled.

That wasn't the last of Han Li's attacks. Crooked Soul's lofty figure appeared from the sea a second later and raised his arms, shooting out two blood-red light beams.

At this same moment, Han Li expressionlessly held a silver sword with a single hand and waved it in arcs of silver light, continuously striking the yellow radiance. Ear-piercing screeches echoed upon each slash. With his other hand, he took out a thick stack of talismans, releasing a barrage of countless fireballs and ice spears. In the following moments, flashes of blinding radiance and sounds of explosions continued without end.

Slowly recovering his consciousness from the pain, Elder Gu panicked. He clearly felt that due to the formation spell's pressure, his enemy's ceaseless attacks, and his lack of magic power from the use of his immemorial bowl, the yellow radiance protecting his body would not last.

Without any regard for the consequences, he used a secret technique to forcefully withdraw magic power. But before this was completed, Han Li's incantation produced an ice-cold sound.

Suddenly, the chaotic seawaters surrounding Elder Gu began to swirl, momentarily increasing the huge pressure affecting his body by several-fold. As the yellow light protecting his body was brought to its final glimmers, it released a mournful groan under Elder Gu's incredulous gaze before it finally disappeared without a trace. With nothing left to obstruct the flying needles, they immediately pierced through his vitals in a flash of red light, bringing Elder Gu to his knees.

A silver light flashed to reveal Han Li silently appearing at his side and the Six United Palace's Elder Gu's fine head then landed over ten meters away.

Immediately after, a fountain of blood shot out from the headless corpse, densely filling the air with the scent of blood.

Han Li let out a long breath, but quickly stepped forward to the side of the corpse to snatch its storage pouch. At the same time, Crooked Soul reached out to collect the yellow bowl magic treasure.

With that, Han Li and Crooked Soul quickly fled away out of the formation in the Divine Wind Boat. After flying for only fifteen meters, Han Li plunged the boat into the ocean and submerged himself about a hundred meters down.

Afterwards, he put away his Divine Wind boat and took out aura-severing red muslin cloth, wrapping it around Crooked Soul and himself. They then used the nameless incantation to restrain their Qi.

Not long after this was done, a formidable and wrathful spiritual sense arrived nearby, searching from up above the nearby sea.

Although the spiritual sense made a fine examination, its owner was unable to find any trace of Han Li or Crooked Soul. After furiously sweeping his spiritual sense through the nearby area once more, he hurriedly rushed away to another area.

After this, Han Li finally felt truly at ease. Naturally, he wouldn't foolishly make a sudden emergence from the sea. Instead, he released a blue light barrier to separate him and Crooked Soul from the ocean and had Crooked Soul enter meditation.

The concealment within the ocean lasted for over half a month.

During those days, the owner of the huge spiritual sense was unwilling to give up and repeatedly searched the nearby seas several times. But as Han Li had always noticed him coming and had restrained his Qi beforehand, he was never successful.

Now that the spiritual sense hadn't appeared for several days, Han Li finally dared to move.

After slowly travelling over fifty kilometers away, he finally flew

out of the seawater, got his bearings, and flew off at his greatest speed.

Naturally, he couldn't return to Stalwart Star Island, and would have to find somewhere else to stay. Although he didn't know what sort of shameful relationship the Six United Palace's Elder Gu and Elder Miao had with the youth named Wu Chou, they would be certain to kill and silence him. But since a Foundation Establishment cultivator such as himself couldn't compare to the remaining two Core Formation cultivators, it would be better to travel far away from the scope of their influence.

It was truly unfortunate to lose his three magic formation tool sets and his Immortal's cave at Minor Expanse Island. With the addition of the lost magic tools during his fight with Elder Gu, Han Li had suffered a truly great loss!

As Han Li flew as fast as he could, he laughed at himself with a bitter smile.

But when compared to the disastrous fates of the other Foundation Establishment cultivators, he couldn't complain! He managed to preserve his own life.

While Han Li was consoling himself, his heart suddenly stirred and he took out Elder Gu's storage pouch. During the previous period under the ocean, Han Li had been apprehensive and hadn't examined the storage pouch as a result. Now was the time to take a look. Surely a Core Formation cultivator couldn't be too poor. With some luck, he might even be able to more than recoup his losses.

After slowly sinking his spiritual sense into the storage pouch, Han Li found eighty mid-grade spirit stones and grew mad with joy.

This Elder Gu was truly quite wealthy! He actually carried such a great amount of spirit stones!

Could it be that Elder Gu was like himself and carried all of his belongings on his person? If this were the case, this would be an ordinary amount of spirit stones for a Core Formation cultivator.

With that in mind, Han Li shifted his attention away from the spirit stones to the other items in the pouch.

There was a yellow, inch-tall jade bottle, two talismans respectively sparkling with yellow and blue light, a book, and an orb sparkling with blue radiance. As for the rest of the items, they were of little value.

The book wasn't anything special. It was a high layer cultivation art, Earthfire Technique. Although it couldn't be said to be common, it was something that he definitely wouldn't cultivate.

Much to Han Li's joy, the two talismans turned out to be treasure talismans, despite him not knowing their names. One of them had a small golden sword drawn on it, and the other had a blue flood dragon.

Han Li then took out the sphere and played around with it for a moment. Eventually, he became certain that it was the core of a grade five demon beast, a very precious item.

Lastly, there was the small, unremarkable bottle. When Han Li opened the small yellow bottle, he spotted five thumb-sized yellow pills. These pills were identical to one another, brightly colored, perfectly shaped, and had a fantastic medicinal scent.

“Dustfall Pills!” Han Li stared at the pills in his hand in complete astonishment..

Although he hadn’t seen this item before, the pills perfectly matched the description found in the “Pill Dao Evaluations”. What else could they possibly be?

Chapter 385: Sea Ape Island

Han Li gently held the pill between two fingers and brought it to his eye, carefully examining it before revealing a faint smile.

It seemed that the fight to flee wasn't a wasted effort. As he had acquired several Dustfall Pills, the odds of his Core Formation should somewhat increase.

After properly putting away the medicine pills, Han Li carefully stored away the bottle in his storage pouch.

Now, Han Li had to find a location that was both safe and had an abundance of Spiritual Qi. So long as either Han Li or Crooked Soul managed to reach Core Formation, they would have a chance when fighting against any Core Formation cultivator that wished to hunt them down.

However, Core Formation wasn't something that could be accomplished in a short amount of time. Other than genius cultivators blessed with heavenly spiritual roots, other cultivators require enough spirit medicines and time to break through the bottleneck.

Spirit Snow Water and Liquid Heavenfire are two such materials required for cultivators that wished to form their core.

While they aren't required in order to succeed in Core Formation, the success-rate without them was so miniscule that it would cause cultivators to spit blood. Although there wasn't an

official statistic, it is said to be less than one percent.

Apart from these two items, many other spirit medicines can also be taken to increase the odds of success for Core Formation, but none of them were as effective as Spirit Snow Water and Liquid Heavenfire.

Unfortunately, taking multiples of these medicines would prove to have no effect. It wasn't like refining Qi during meditation where it was optimal to take appropriate amounts of other spirit medicines. In fact, it would most likely prove to have an opposite effect.

But what was laughable was not only were the effects of the other medicines far inferior to that of the Spirit Snow Water and Liquid Heavenfire, they required herbs that were more rare and harder to find. In addition, these medicines would often require several thousand-year-old herbs to create.

Ordinary cultivators wouldn't have such mighty spending power! At best, they would have one or two luxurious additions to their Spirit Snow Water and Liquid Heavenfire.

Of course, this didn't pose a problem for Han Li. Apart from the pills requiring a few rare spirit herbs he didn't have or had never heard of, he had refined over ten spiritual medicines to aid in Core Formation, all of which were now safely stored inside his storage pouch.

But what was most surprising was that these medicines didn't

require Innate Truefire to be refined. They were simply mixed together like ordinary medicines of the mortal world. In addition, these pill formulas could easily be found in ancient records. When Han Li initially found them, he was stunned for quite a while; even to this day, he was still left puzzled.

As for the five Dustfall Pills he acquired, they were extremely rare supplementary medicines that all cultivators nearing Core Formation desired.

However, even with the aid of these many medicine pills, the probability of success in Core Formation wouldn't be vastly higher than those without. According to Han Li's research, his mind bogglingly extravagant method of Core Formation would only raise his odds of success by ten percent at most when compared to other cultivators.

On the whole, taking medicine should be a bit better than not, but this was only Han Li's opinion.

Additionally, Core Formation wasn't something that could be concluded in merely ten days or half a month. According to ancient records and the Core Formation experience of Li Huayuan, Han Li's former master, it would take about three to five years to conclude. The specific duration would depend on an individual's own aptitude.

From here on out, he would have to avoid feeling great emotion, avoid any battles with others, and find a place with acceptable Spiritual Qi.

Thus, it was imperative that Han Li found an island to seclude himself and attempt Core Formation, even if it were somewhat sparse regarding Spiritual Qi.

With that in mind, Han Li took out a jade slip that contained a huge map of the seas with Stalwart Star Island and the other two main islands at the center.

Han Li submerged his spiritual sense into the slip for quite some time. After eventually finding his approximate location, he then searched for remote, small sized islands.

After the time it took to cook a meal, Han Li withdrew his spiritual sense from the jade slip with a thoughtful expression.

He looked at the seas and the blazing sun in the sky before finding his desired direction, turning into a streak of white light and disappearing across the horizon.

Along the way, Han Li stopped at a few desolate islands to recover his magic power. He avoided any islands that were inhabited, as he was fearful he of leaving behind traces for anyone pursuing him.

After changing direction several times, Han Li finally found the region he wished to travel to and quickly flew off.

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Two months later, Han Li and Crooked Soul appeared above a remote island.

This island wasn't nearly as large as Stalwart Star Island, but it was quite a bit larger than ordinary small islands, barely large enough to be considered a medium sized island. It was the "Sea Ape Island" that Han Li had endured a long, arduous journey for.

The island had few mortals and no cultivators above Qi Condensation, along with no island lord to speak of. It was a place of freedom where everyone could come and go as they pleased. As for the island's name, the nearby seas were occupied by the particularly strange low-grade demon beast, Sea Apes.

This demon beast was almost entirely the same as a common ape, apart from its ability to use the low-grade Water Arrow magic technique and its considerable intelligence. By adulthood, it was nearly as intelligent as an eight-year old child, and cultivators are fond of capturing them to act as workers for their immortal's cave.

Although Sea Apes are considered demon beasts, they are capable of being easily subdued by sixth layer Qi Condensation cultivators. As such, a few small ships would arrive annually, hiring low grade cultivators to capture and sell the beasts.

There were a few small merchants that had collectively set up a formation spell on the island and had established a long storefront that bought living Sea Apes year long. Every so often, a ship would arrive and leave with a large quantity of Sea Apes.

As such, the island became a gathering point for low-grade cultivators striving to acquire spirit stones.

But after a formation spell was established, rogue cultivators came to Sea Ape Island for long term residence as it contained a massive spirit vein of fair quality. Although the spirit vein couldn't be said to be exceptional, it was so large and broad that the entire island was suitable for low-grade cultivation.

As for spirit wells or any other dense areas of Spiritual Qi, Sea Ape Island was largely lacking when compared to other islands. Thus, it didn't invite conflict with any high-grade cultivators.

With sparse Spiritual Qi and the mere local specialty of sea apes, it naturally escaped the notice of greater powers and became a free land of low-grade cultivators. Although a Foundation Establishment or Core Formation cultivator would occasionally arrive at the island, they were mostly just passing through.

This island made for an exceptionally good place for Han Li to hide and undergo Core Formation!

.....

Two days later, Han Li stood on the peak of some desolate mountain on the island. As he gazed at his newly created temporary cave dwelling, he felt great satisfaction.

Apart from a simple medicine garden and two secret rooms, there weren't any other complex designs.

Han Li used a formation tool set to lay down an ordinary concealment formation spell at the cave's entrance and carefully released his two "Bloodjade Spiders" from his storage pouch, setting them to guard the entrance of his cave.

Having undergone years of nurturing, the two white spiders had grown to the size of his head and had ascended two grades, becoming high grade one demon beasts capable of easily dealing with ordinary Qi Condensation cultivators. Han Li had left all of his other wondrous bugs behind at his true Immortal's cave on Minor Expanse island.

Han Li guessed that those who sought to either silence him or avenge Elder Gu would definitely search his Immortal's cave at Minor Expanse Island.

Although the false and true Immortal's cave were concealed by three great formations, they wouldn't be able to withstand a Core Formation cultivator's attacks for long. As for his false Immortal's cave, it would undoubtedly be revealed.

But according to Han Li's estimations, there was a fifty percent chance of his true Immortal's cave remaining hidden.

This was because the passageway to his true Immortal's cave was concealed by mortal mechanisms rather than any easily perceived formation spells. Its entrance was cleverly blocked by a huge,

engraved stone chair.

If someone were to only inspect his false Immortal's cave, Han Li was completely confident that they wouldn't find anything amiss. But if a particularly meticulous examiner were to come, it may prove unfortunate.

After all, the other mountain contained wondrous bugs with a unique aura. It definitely wouldn't be concealed from the strong spiritual sense of a Core Formation cultivator.

Although Han Li was unwilling to let go of the wondrous bugs he hadn't been able to tame, he could only resign himself to fate.

Even if they weren't fed for six years, they should still be able to survive. Such a situation situation had occurred before!

With those dim thoughts in mind, Han Li and Crooked Soul each entered their own respective rooms.

Chapter 386: Core Formation In Four Years

Han Li meditated for several days in his hidden room before taking the spirit medicines. After reaching his peak state, he took out a small bottle of Liquid Heavenfire.

He lifted his head and placed a few drops into his mouth before hastily putting away the bottle. He then closed his eyes, waiting for the medicinal power to flare. Shortly after, Han Li felt his meridians start to scald. His true origin had turned into something like boiling water and started to quickly flow through his meridians.

Han Li was initially dumbstruck, but he hastily took out an unknown spiritual medicine and instantly swallowed it down. Afterwards, he started to cultivate the Azure Essence Sword Art in an attempt to break through his bottleneck.

The day that Han Li broke through to the seventh layer, would be the day that Han Li reached Core Formation stage.

Before this, Han Li had instructed Crooked Soul in the neighboring room to also take the Liquid Heavenfire and other spiritual medicines with his spiritual sense.

The Divine Blood Light that Crooked Soul cultivated was considered a quick success Devil Dao cultivation art. Normally, there would be no possibility of Core Formation, but with the [Five Elements Blood Cores], his chances of Core Formation were the same as Han Li's.

Crooked Soul didn't use a cultivation art to form a core, he instead swallowed the Five Elements Blood Cores and refined the cores' power to form a fiend core.

But in contrast, as his Core Formation process was much simpler than Han Li's, Han Li didn't need to pay further attention to Crooked Soul after giving out his orders.

Although Han Li's success in Core Formation was uncertain, he was still going to make a serious attempt. Even if he were to fail, he would accumulate a large amount of experience for his next attempt.

With that thought, Han Li gradually shut out all sense of the external world and deeply sank into bitter cultivation.

At that moment, Han Li became completely oblivious to both time and the outside world.

Time passed day by day, as springs passed and winters arrived...

Four years later, Sea Ape Island was quite lively and disordered. There was a faint atmosphere of excitement present in the island's city and the docks.

At the time of noon that day, on a remote mountain on the island, a scene occurred that left a cultivator in secluded cultivation dumbstruck.

He saw the faraway cloudless dark blue skies suddenly filled with clouds and wind!

A dense, black cloud had appeared out of nowhere, enveloping some barren mountain. With flashes of silver lightning and claps of deafening thunder, it appeared as if a crazed serpent was wildly dancing.

At that same time, the Heaven-Earth Spiritual Qi from all around the barren mountain started to revolve around it with a long cry. A huge vortex spanning two kilometers formed underneath the black clouds, thoroughly sucking away the Spiritual Qi from over ten kilometers away and leaving the nearby rogue cultivators in great astonishment.

They all walked out of their places of cultivation and hastily flew towards the barren mountain.

Although these cultivators were ignorant and ill informed, many of them realized that this astonishing scene was clearly caused by a senior succeeding in Core Formation.

There was another Core Formation cultivator that appeared in the Scattered Star Seas! However, it was extremely surprising to the rogue cultivators that someone would attempt to form their core in an area with such sparse Spiritual Qi.

As they felt both awe and admiration, they wanted to see the result. They even had the faint hope of forming some sort of

connection to this senior; perhaps, they could actually become his disciple.

Without waiting for them to arrive, the distant vortex had already absorbed enough Spiritual Qi, and with the huge cry of a phoenix, the vortex collapsed, scattering its remaining Spiritual Qi. The scattered Spiritual Qi then faintly shined with rainbow light, creating a beautiful sight .

Afterwards, the cloud dispersed, the lightning and thunder disappeared, and everything returned to normal, returning to fine sunny weather.

At that moment, those rogue cultivators that flew near the barren mountain, suddenly heard an extremely cold voice, “Those that approach this mountain without permission will die!”

Those grim words were completely emotionless, causing the many low-grade cultivators nearby to grow pale. They all suddenly stopped and looked at each other. It was quite obvious that this Senior who succeeded in Core Formation did not wish for anybody to disturb him.

After glancing at each other for a while, they all had no intention of disobediently moving forward and silently left.

Not long after, the news of a cultivator having just reached Core Formation had spread throughout Sea Ape Island, leaving those who had been unaware shocked.

They were extremely puzzled as to why a cultivator would choose to undergo Core Formation at Sea Ape Island. Soon after, a huge amount of low-grade cultivators started to create new Immortal's caves at the center of the barren mountains.

Although the Core Formation cultivator had given a warning and they didn't dare to disobey and approach too closely to the mountain, the rogue cultivators all chose to cultivate nearby in hopes that they may perhaps meet him!

For a time, the nearby lands were flourishing with people.

But unbeknown to them, the barren mountain had long been abandoned, and the Core Formation cultivator in question was flying in the sky about a thousand kilometers away. He had a tranquil youth flying with him, Han Li, who had failed to form his core.

As Han Li glanced at the meditating Crooked soul, his face was calm despite feeling joy in his heart.

In truth, he had left seclusion about a year ago after having taken spiritual medicines and meditated for three years, he couldn't help but give up. This attempt at Core Formation had definitely failed as there wasn't the slightest trace of his true essence solidifying. As such, he stopped cultivating and focused on assisting Crooked Soul in Core Formation.

Along with the forceful assistance of several other spirit medicines, Crooked Soul met a massive success a few days before

and eventually formed a fiend core.

This extremely smooth process left Han Li quite surprised and beyond happy.

After Han Li shouted at the rogue cultivators that came to look, he immediately abandoned the Immortal's cave and secretly brought Crooked Soul away from Sea Ape Island.

He now wanted to return to Minor Expanse Island and see whether or not his true Immortal's cave had been discovered. He was confident that even if his pursuers were patient, there would be no way that they would have a Core Formation cultivator standing watch at Minor Expanse Island.

If it was unguarded, he would take away all of the wondrous bugs from his true Immortal's cave and fly far away, completely abandoning the southwest sea. With the Scattered Star Seas being extremely large and Crooked Soul having an early Core Formation cultivation, Han Li would surely be able to find a suitable location.

In addition, although Crooked Soul wasn't able to use the "Green Brilliance Sword" due to his mismatching spiritual roots, he was still able to barely make use of Elder Gu's magic treasure, the "Immemorial Bowl".

Even if he wasn't able to completely refine the treasure and make complete use of its might, he was still able to use the magic treasure to fight against other Core Formation cultivators.

Besides, he had also handed over the small golden sword treasure talisman and the golden skull treasure talisman to Crooked Soul. As for the small saber talisman treasure, Han Li kept it for himself.

With Crooked Soul's Core Formation cultivation, he would be able to activate the treasure talisman at a much greater speed and attack enemies in an instant, making up for his deficiencies of not being able to make complete use of a magic treasure's might.

With that in mind, Han Li drove his Divine Wind Boat at its greatest speed, turning into a streak of white light flying in the direction of Stalwart Star Island.

...

A month later, Han Li and Crooked Soul appeared once more above Minor Expanse Island.

After searching through Minor Expanse Island with his spiritual sense and finding no cultivators present, he and Crooked Soul entered the island through the dock and flew towards the mountains containing his Immortal's cave.

Although he was still far away from the mountains, Han Li's spiritual sense had already examined them ahead of time.

Han Li was dumbfounded! Not only were both his true and false Immortal's caves untouched but the three spell formations he had placed down were as well. This was truly beyond his imagination.

Upon this strange discovery, Han Li became even more vigilant and stopped the Divine Wind Boat at a distant location.

He didn't enter the formation spell. Instead, he gloomily shifted his gaze around.

In the end, he discovered there was nothing odd about the mountains. Han Li lowered his head and muttered to himself for a moment and suddenly stamped down on his Divine Wind Boat and started flying into the formations with a raised brow.

The formation spells were exactly the same as they were four years ago. After further hesitation, Han Li entered his Immortal's caves.

He didn't care about the false Immortal's cave in the short mountain; instead, he directly entered his true Immortal's cave and headed towards the secret room housing the wondrous bugs.

When Han Li arrived in front of the secret room, his jaw dropped. The scene before him left him stunned.

Chapter 387: Gold Devouring Beetles

Han Li had kept his wondrous insects in several tens of concealed stone rooms of differing sizes. Fearful that they would escape, he had set up a small formation in each of them so that they wouldn't break down the walls.

According to Han Li's thoughts, as these wondrous bugs were young despite having high rankings, these ordinary restrictions should be enough to contain them. But now, his formations were no longer present and the stone doors were filled with hexagonal shaped holes.

Han Li was aghast and willed Crooked Soul to take a large step forward and open the nearest stone door, revealing a completely empty room devoid of life.

Han Li let out a light sigh. Although he had already prepared himself, he still felt rather depressed.

After sweeping his gaze over the room, he turned around to look at the stone door. Then he wordlessly walked out and squatted in front of the broken door.

The stone door was very strangely damaged, with small holes of similar sizes densely scattered across it. But what Han Li didn't understand was why the holes were so rough, unlike the smooth cuts magic tools would produce.

Han Li wrinkled his brow and slowly stood up.

He slowly shut his eyes and swept his spiritual sense throughout the rest of the rooms. Having found that the others rooms were the same, Han LI felt quite a bit of heartache.

But suddenly, his face moved. He opened his eyes to reveal a cold glint and walked towards a different hidden room.

The room was also empty, but Han Li entered without any hesitation and crouched, picking up something from the limestone floor and placing it in his palm. He then brought it up to his eye and saw that it was a bean sized insect shell that twinkled with a silvery light. It was very beautiful and appeared to be entirely created out of silver. Han Li then touched the insect shell to find that its shell was extremely smooth and very hard.

After lowering his head in contemplation, he was certain that this wasn't the insect shell of anything he was raising.

Han LI's face grew solemn, and he narrowed his eyes.

From the center of this room, Han Li started to search every inch of his Immortal's cave with his spiritual sense. Han Li was confident that he'd be able to find something.

After a moment, Han Li made a surprising discovery in his medicine garden. A sparkling silver sphere hung on the thick trunk of a flower tree, an undoubtedly recent addition to the Immortal's cave.

Han Li called out to Crooked Soul and gloomily walked towards the medicine garden.

The silver sphere wasn't very large and was only the size of the head of a small child. But its sparkling, bewitching silver light was extremely eye-catching.

Han Li stood at the medicine garden's entrance and attentively stared at the silver sphere in silence. He felt that he had heard of this silver sphere before, but he couldn't recall anything about it at the moment. Regardless, he was certain that this object was related to the silver insect shell he had previously found.

'Insect shell!' Han Li's mind suddenly thought of something.

He hastily patted his storage pouch and a green jade slip appeared in his hand. This was the document of detailing the insect cultivation experiences of the Controlling Spirit cultivator that previously occupied Crooked Soul's body.

After submerging his spiritual sense into it, Han Li immediately found that the description of a rank twelve insect seemed relevant.

"Gold Devouring Beetles, ranked twelve amongst the wondrous bugs. Travels in vicious swarms. It loves to eat other wondrous bugs and is adept at consuming the [five metals](#) and Heaven-Earth Spiritual Qi. They also cannot tolerate heat or cold. It is extremely vicious and tends to amass into a sphere. It tends to perch on spiritual trees. Jade and wood are capable of capturing it. Spider

type wondrous bugs are capable of restraining it...”

Five Metals: gold, silver, copper, iron, and tin

After reading through the passage several times, he felt pleasant surprise and couldn't help but take another look at the silver sphere.

Although there weren't detailed instructions for raising this wondrous bug, he was completely sure he would've been willing to trade all those wondrous insects ranked lower than the Goldenback Demon Mantis for it.

According to what the jade slip said, the Gold Devouring Beetle was capable of eating through anything, apart from jade or wood. As such, seizing them is quite difficult, but Han Li fortunately had two Bloodjade spiders. Although they were ranked far lower than the Gold Devouring Beetles, they should still be able to restrain it. The jade slip had mentioned that newly hatched silver Gold Devourer Beetles are especially vulnerable to spider type magic beasts ranked at least high grade one, much like his own two spiders.

However, he first wanted to test whether this insect was as vicious as described in the jade slip.

Crooked Soul stepped forward in large steps and stood in front of him. Crooked Soul then emitted a blood-red light and opened his hand before suddenly flying over in a streak of red light. He ended up grabbing the sphere without any trouble, and it didn't show any reaction in the slightest.

Han Li stroked his nose and felt slight disappointment. The Controlling Spirit Sect cultivator had bragged about this insect's ferociousness, but why was it so slow?

After a moment of hesitation, Han Li had Crooked Soul test it using other methods.

With an ominous glint flashing from Crooked Soul's eyes, he waved his hand and a green magic art struck the blood light surrounding the silver sphere. Suddenly, the blood light gradually turned purple and quickly combusted into an impressive devil fire.

The bewitching devilfire roasted the silver sphere. Eventually, the silver sphere appeared as if it were made from sand and started to break into specks of silver, producing a humming noise.

Han Li carefully looked at it and saw that the silver specks were soybean sized flying insects. Apart from sharp teeth that could be seen with the naked eye, they appeared exactly the same as a common beetle and didn't seem noteworthy in the least.

Han Li was confused! Was this not the Gold Devouring Beetle? Could he have been mistaken?

But after looking at them for a moment more, Han Li was stunned.

Crooked Soul's devilfire wasn't burning the beetles at all. Not

only were they unscathed, but incredulously, they were eating the devilfire at an extremely fast pace. In the blink of an eye, half of the violet flame had disappeared.

After recovering from his surprise, Han Li was wild with joy.

He instantly opened the leather bag at his waist and released his two Bloodjade spiders with a flash of light.

Without any hesitation, he gave the order to capture them alive.

The instance when the final flames of the devilfire were eaten away by the Gold Devouring Bugs, his two spiders shot out a shining white liquid from their mouths that turned into two three-meter-wide nets. They were much different than ordinary webs. Their extremely finely woven webs left gaps too small for the silver beetles to escape.

The Gold Devouring Beetles detected danger and immediately turned into silver arrows, fiercely attempting to shoot out of the web.

Pupu. The two spider webs firmly held against the assault from the silver arrows, turning the web into a ball and causing the Gold Devouring Beetles to grow frantic. After releasing a deafening screech, they started to tear at the spider webs with their teeth, intending to break free of the spider web and escape.

The two spiders gave me them no such opportunity and

continued to spew out mouthfuls of white liquid. In the blink of an eye, the beetles were trapped in a huge ball of webs.

Han Li knew that the spider webs wouldn't be able to trap the Gold Devouring Bugs for long, so he hastily took out a jade box and quickly jammed the ball of webs into it. Afterwards, he closed the box and placed it into his storage pouch.

Normally, demon beasts could only be contained in a specialized spirit beast pouch; otherwise, they would face suffocation from the lack of air in an ordinary storage pouch.

However, high ranking wondrous bugs were different as they had incomparable vitality and could survive in a storage pouch without air. Otherwise, that Controlling Spirit Sect cultivator definitely wouldn't have carried so many of his insect larvae in his storage pouch.

Naturally, if he truly wished to use the beasts to fight, a specialized bag for spirit beasts would be best. Not only could he summon them easier, but it would also be more convenient to train them.

Most importantly, the specialized pouch was able to store demon beasts at a reduced size, where ordinary storage pouches while incapable of shrinking living things. Thus, even if it were a wondrous bug demon beast, they would still have to be stored in a spirit beast pouch if they were too large.

Having put away the jade box, Han Li swept his spiritual sense

through his Immortal's cave once more, fearful that he had missed something. Apart from discovering numerous dense, small holes in his storeroom, Han Li didn't discover anything else.

Those small holes should've been marks left behind from when the Gold Devouring Beetles dug into his Immortal's cave.

Since Han Li no longer dared to stay behind in this Immortal's cave, he immediately left and soared off after retrieving his three magic formations.

Chapter 388: Crooked Soul's Devilish Might

After flying about five kilometers away from Minor Expanse Island, Han Li's expression suddenly darkened, and he stopped his Divine Wind Boat.

“Don't hide! Reveal yourself!” Han Li spoke calmly while facing forward.

“Yi!” A cry of surprise came from an empty area. With a flash of rainbow brilliance, eight Foundation Establishment cultivators appeared not far in front of him.

“Han Li, in order to acquire Dustfall Pills, you and Crooked Soul killed the Tail Star Island Lord's disciple and the other cultivators involved. Now, we've come as enforcers by order of our island lord. You are to quickly enter our custody so we may deliver you to Island Lord Zhan Tai for punishment!” A late Foundation Establishment cultivator among the group proudly yelled to Han Li.

In order to fool the others, Han Li and Crooked Soul had restrained their own cultivation. As a result, the group had misjudged their cultivation and appeared carefree. Although they were somewhat surprised that Han Li had discovered and ruined their ambush, with their superior cultivation and numbers, they should be able to easily handle them! As a result, they were careless and took a blunt, direct approach.

After calmly sizing them up, Han Li insipidly said, “You are

cultivators from Stalwart Star Island? Do you have any evidence that I killed those other cultivators?”

Upon hearing this, a white-haired old man among them was stunned for a moment before sneering and saying, “What? You still wish to quibble against the testimony of the Six United Palace’s Elder Miao? Don’t get your hopes up! Our island lord has already said that you two are extremely crafty and that we are to immediately destroy your cultivation.”

Han Li’s expression slightly changed. With a face covered in a layer of icy intent, he said, “Destroy our cultivation? Does your island lord not intend to resolve this matter with us?”

“Hehe! You two have fled in guilt for several years; the evidence has long been collected. What is there to resolve? Everyone, go! Let’s bring these two back for a reward!” The white-haired old man turned his head, and impatiently called out to the others with wide eyes. Suddenly, the cultivators acted without speaking any further, releasing their magic tools towards Han Li in streaks of overbearing light.

Han Li watched on with his eyes wide open. How was this possibly intending to destroy his cultivation? It seems they were gazing at him with killing intent and intended to eliminate him.

Although he didn’t know whether or not there was something amiss, Han Li had no choice but to get rid of these cultivators.

“Crooked Soul, kill them! Don’t allow a single one to escape!”

While Han Li's voice wasn't loud, it was colder than ice.

Crooked Soul, who had been standing motionlessly behind Han Li, silently stepped forward and released an astonishing blood-red light. After a moment, his entire body was enveloped in a blinding sphere of light. Then with a soft hiss, a yellow light flashed underneath Crooked Soul's feet and he shot towards the approaching magic tools.

With several flashes of light, the incoming magic tools' radiance disappeared, and they were instantly enveloped by a hundred-meter wide barrier of blood-red light, becoming completely sluggish.

Crooked Soul appeared at the center of the blood-red light and expressionlessly formed a hand incantation, spitting out the word, "Restrain!" Suddenly, the magic tools moved forward and shot toward Crooked Soul's side with complete obedience. With a wave of his sleeve, they disappeared; it seemed he had collected them.

Crooked Soul then expressionlessly turned his attention to the group of enforcers. The scene had left them dumbstruck.

"Core Formation cultivator! He's a Core Formation cultivator!" With Crooked Soul's true cultivation unveiled, the cultivator who shouted this turned pale. The others were equally aghast, but two quick-witted cultivators immediately turned around and hurriedly rushed off.

Their leader, the white-haired old man, no longer held a trace of

arrogance. Only an expression of disbelief remained on his face.

Acting under Han Li's orders, Crooked Soul couldn't possibly allow anyone to escape.

His eyes grew as scarlet as blood while he emotionlessly gazed at the two that were fleeing. He wordlessly raised his hands and shot out scarlet-red beams which moved at an extreme speed. In the blink of an eye, the beams of light had already caught up to them.

One of the cultivators wore a sparkling earth-yellow armor, and the other cultivator was wrapped in an obviously exceptional blue chain of light. But with just the slightest touch of the light beam, both the magic tools and the cultivators were turned to ash, extinguishing any thoughts of escaping by the other cultivators and leaving their faces deathly pale.

The white-haired old man was terrified and hastily shouted, "Senior misunderstands! This was all a misunderstanding..."

Crooked Soul didn't pay attention to any of his evasive words. With a tremble of his shoulders, the blood light separated from his body and flew off, forming a large blood cloud above the group of enforcers.

Then with a wave of his hand, he released a streak of purple light that seemed to ignite the blood cloud as if it were a spark striking oil. Suddenly, the sky was filled with purple flame, and the cultivators were suppressed from every direction.

The cultivators below all displayed expressions of despair as they each released their defensive magic tools while strenuously begging for mercy. But under the ice-cold gaze of Crooked Soul, the purple devilflames turned all of the magic tools and cultivators into dust after just a short moment.

Crooked Soul's figure blurred and reappeared, holding all of their storage pouches in his hand.

Han Li had already fetched the storage pouches of the two who had fled and flew back to Crooked Soul's side.

“Let's go! It will become troublesome if any Core Formation cultivators were to arrive!” Han Li looked in every direction before muttering as if he were both talking to himself and Crooked Soul.

After Crooked Soul silently returned to the Divine Wind Boat in a blur, Han Li immediately set off, flying far away as the Divine Wind Boat became a streak of white light.

Not long after, a blue and red streak of light flew over from the direction of Stalwart Star Island, and in the blink of an eye, they arrived at the area where Crooked Soul had killed the enforcers. Once the blinding radiances faded away, an old man with a devious expression and a middle-aged man that emitted a gray Qi appeared floating in the air.

“It should be here! The Spiritual Qi fluctuations haven't yet disappeared. It seems the killer left recently!” The middle-aged man gloomily said.

One of the enforcers that had been on duty at Minor Expanse Island was the middle-aged man's disciple.

When his disciple had died, a soul tablet created from secret techniques had revealed a dark omen. The middle-aged man instantly discovered that his disciple had encountered mishap, but he was currently a guest at his good friend's Immortal's cave. They had flown over as fast as they could, but he hadn't expected that he'd be too late.

After pointing in the direction that Han Li fled, he slowly said, "Island Lord Yuan! He should've fled in that direction! I will use the Transient Tracer Technique to investigate for a moment. If we chase after the killer, there is a thirty percent chance likelihood we will be able to stop him."

"Alright! If we both give chase, we will be certain to stop the killer!" The middle-aged man's body flourished with grey Qi and revealed a sinister expression.

"According to the collision of Spiritual Qi in the area, it seems the killer should be a Core Formation cultivator. Although he acted alone, there is no way of knowing whether he is accompanying other cultivators. Does Fellow Daoist Yuan truly wish to clash with cultivators of similar strength over a common disciple?" The old man suddenly changed the topic and earnestly attempted to dissuade the middle-aged man.

The middle-aged man was initially stunned upon hearing this,

but he soon replied with a displeased face, “Don’t tell me that my disciple died in vain! If this were to get out, then wouldn’t I be marked as a coward?”

“Hehe, apart from me, who else would know of it? Not only was the killer a Core Formation cultivator, but since he dared to casually kill near Stalwart Star Island, he definitely isn’t someone from the southwest sea. Naturally, there won’t be any drivel spoken about it and as for me, I’m not someone who spouts gossip. As such, so long as we return and say we had arrived too late, then this matter can be laid to rest. Otherwise, you would be doing battle with an unknown cultivator of the same rank for a common disciple. The risk absolutely isn’t worth it!” After chuckling for a moment, he expressed disapproval.

Having heard this, Island Lord Yuan’s fury gradually disappeared, and he revealed a pensive expression.

After muttering to himself for a moment, his expression became calm once more and he cupped his hands to the old man, saying, “Many thanks for Fellow Daoist Qi’s warning. I cannot thank you enough. Let us return! In the future, I will treat that disciple’s clan particularly well and then I will let it be.”

“That would be appropriate! As we are those who pursued the Immortal Dao for such a long time, our lives are even more precious. If we are to brave danger, then it must come at a sufficient price!” The old man said while concealing a sinister smile.

“However, these enforcers were to keep watch on Minor Expanse

Island's Immortal's cave. How were they able to provoke a travelling Core Formation cultivator into killing them? Could they have some relationship to the two wanted fugitives of the three main islands and the Six United Palaces?" The middle-aged man quickly became perplexed despite much consideration.

"Enough! It has nothing to do with us! Your relationship with the Six United Palaces is too shallow to diligently pursue those two. Since I am Deputy Island Lord and you are the Island Lord, is there any use in blindly worrying about this?" The old man snorted and wore a sour expression.

After hearing this, the middle-aged man faintly smiled.

Afterwards, Island Lord Yuan and the old man chatted for a moment before returning to the island.

Chapter 389: Heavenly Star City And The Star Palace

Han Li had no way of knowing how that potential crisis had resolved itself. As such, he continued to act carefully and flew to the northeast as he was now a wanted criminal and incapable of further remaining in the southwest sea. However, if he were to go to anywhere else, he would need a map of the area, but Han Li only had a map of the southwest sea.

Due to this deficiency, Han Li stopped on a random island after a month of flying.

Although the island wasn't large, it contained a very prosperous market city because of its location on the border of the southwest sea and other territories.

Wanting to be careful, Han Li concealed the appearances of both him and Crooked Soul using a secret technique and even put on a cloak afterwards. As such, apart from those with a higher cultivation than Crooked Soul, they would only be able to see a vague red light with their spiritual sense.

For the rest of the day, Han Li replenished a large amount of materials from the island's market city and bought many ancient records that presented information on the circumstances of the various areas of Scattered Star Seas along with their respective maps. He ended up spending quite a bit.

There were a great number of stores on the island that were

overjoyed that such a great spender arrived.

Having bought all he wanted, Han Li didn't dare to linger and left the small island on that same day.

While sitting on his Divine Wind Boat, Han Li took out the jade slips one after another and carefully read through them. After an unknown amount of time, he let out a long breath, tossed the jade slips into his storage pouch, and entered deep contemplation.

After carefully reading through the jade slips, Han Li possessed a general understanding of the Scattered Star Seas.

The Scattered Star Seas were huge, but nobody actually knew how vast they truly were. As no one was stupid enough to attempt to explore its entirety, the sea maps only charted a small portion of the Scattered Star Seas. This was a fact that all cultivators of the Scattered Star Seas acknowledge.

The sea territories that were explored were commonly referred to as the Inner Star Seas, while the unexplored territories were known as the Outer Star Seas. Ordinarily when someone spoke of the "Scattered Star Seas", they were actually referring to the Inner Star Seas.

The Outer Star Seas were also known by the frightful name of the Demon Seas and was the home to inconceivably gigantic demon beasts. They were said to be no weaker than Nascent Soul cultivators. Low grade cultivators that hadn't ventured to the Outer Star Sea would have their jaws drop for quite a while upon

hearing this.

Records have even said that in ancient times, regardless of whether it were the inner or outer seas, demon beasts reigned supreme, and cultivators were trapped on small, solitary islands. After an unknown amount of time, the previous generations of the Scattered Star Seas managed to slay the demon beasts one by one, making way for the development of the current Inner Star Seas.

As of today, the superpower named the “Star Palace” reigned over entire Scattered Star Seas. This superpower had existed for so long that even ancient records didn’t mention when it had first formed.

While the origins of its creation are uncertain, some believe that it was established by ancient elders that eliminated the demon beasts. Others said that an ancient hero united the Scattered Star Seas at the time, while other rumors are endless and equally contested.

The current Star Palace had established their transcendent Heavenly Star City on a huge island at the center of the Scattered Star Seas. It’s two city lords, the Heavenly Star Sages, rule the entire sect from their city.

The two city lords are extremely mysterious and had never left Heavenly Star City or revealed themselves in public. As such, no outsiders had seen their true appearance. However, it is rumored that the two sages weren’t late Nascent Soul cultivators, but instead, they were divine beings at the Deity Transformation stage.

After all, the Heavenly Star Sages have been famous for nearly a thousand years. How could common cultivators live for so long?

Apart from the Heavenly Palace and Heavenly Star City, there are eight outer territories and four inner territories in the Inner Star Seas. Each of the territories' three largest islands served to directly govern their respective areas. These cities were known collectively as the twenty-four Outer Star Islands and the twelve Inner Star Islands. They were all subservient to Heavenly Star City.

As for the Stalwart Star Island Han Li had stayed at, it was one of Heavenly Star City's Outer Star Islands

With the addition of the many small subsidiary islands of the star islands, the Star Palace truly held quite a bit of authority.

But what was most notable was that the Star Palace appointed star island lords through two methods.

The twelve Inner Star Islands were each administered by six people chosen by the two great sages. As for the twenty four Outer Star Islands, Heavenly Star City would host a centennial competition where the final victors would each become an island lord and enjoy the status of a regional ruler.

As such, the centennial competition hosted at the Heavenly Star City became known as the Star Selection Assembly. Every time it convened, nearly all the high grade cultivators of the Scattered Star Seas congregated at the city.

Some cultivators came with the dream of becoming an island lord, while others merely wished to broaden their horizon or socialize. There were even those that wished to use the opportunity to exchange medicine pills, materials, cultivation arts and other such items. As it was considered a fleeting opportunity, Heavenly Star City was overcrowded during this time. But even without the additional bustle of the Star Selection Assembly, the Heavenly Star City was a lively city where both villains and heroes dwell.

Apart from a prohibition of fighting in the cities and spirit stones taxes for long term residences, the Star Palace left the city alone, allowing it to become a place of freedom where cultivators of all ranks could come and go as they pleased. As for wanted nefarious cultivators, so long as they didn't stir up trouble in the city, the Star Palace wouldn't take the initiative to arrest them.

The great merchant clans were extremely satisfied with such a free environment and had stores set up in the city year round. They also established their own respective auctions and even acquired many types of spirit stone generating businesses.

As such, an innumerable amount of rare items flowed through Heavenly Star City from the Scattered Star Seas each year.

In addition, Heavenly Star City had another reason for attracting so many cultivators. The Star Palace had set up a transportation formation in the city that led directly to the Outer Star Seas.

So long as someone paid a large sum of spirit stones, they could teleport to many of the “Demon Beast Islands” of varying sizes in the Outer Star Sea. These isolated islands were established by previous generations and all contained Spiritual Qi. When one arrived at these islands, cultivators would be able to kill all sorts of demon beasts in the nearby seas and sell off the demon cores for spirit stones back at Heavenly Star City.

As for the value of spirit stones, a grade five demon beast core could be sold for nearly a thousand spirit stones. As for grade six spirit stones, the profits would be enough to fund a Foundation Establishment cultivator for a lifetime. As such, a significant amount of cultivators annually came to Heavenly Star City to use the transportation formation.

After all, flying directly to the Outer Star Seas without using the transportation formation would not only take an extremely long amount of time, it would also be extremely dangerous to fly unguided like a headless housefly.

With that in mind, Han Li decided to go to Heavenly Star Island with nearly no deliberation. Regardless of safety or acquisition of demon cores, he felt an attraction to this city by no small amount.

Of course, there were other powers of varying strength apart from the Star Palace in the Scattered Star Seas, such as: the Four Freedoms Merchant Alliance, the Devilcharm Sect, the Three Immortal Sect, Night Dragon Island, and so on. Of course, Zenith Yin Island and the Six United Palaces were significant powers as well.

After Han Li silently sorted this information in his mind, he took out a map of the Scattered Star Seas and carefully looked at it. Having decided his destination, Han Li pierced through the air, turning the Divine Wind Boat into a white streak of light.

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Several months later, a white light streaked past the air above the sea. Standing on the boat was Han Li, tired from the long, nonstop travel.

Such a long and arduous journey was actually a rare experience for Han Li. This was because during his entire journey, he attempted to cultivate the Great Development Technique while flying on his magic tool without end.

From the very start, multitasking had proven extremely challenging, and a technique that divided one's consciousness to control numerous puppets wasn't exactly easy to cultivate. As he split his attention while cultivating, he had frequently made many errors.

The Divine Wind Boat would occasionally begin to fly off at an angle, leaving him unable to concentrate on splitting his divine sense. He hadn't made any progress for several days, but the old adage proved true that practice really does make perfect. After countless attempts and distractions, Han Li was eventually able to forcefully cultivate the Great Development Technique while flying.

However, Han Li had given up on multitasking and focused on

flying forward while standing at the front of the Divine Wind Boat.

Half a month later, Han Li judged that he had arrived near Heavenly Star City given the arrangement of the desolate islands he had passed and felt his heart stir with excitement.

After a short moment more, Han Li's expression slightly changed after he vaguely saw a black dot in the distance that seemed to appear huge.

Han Li instantly stamped down on his magic tool, expediting his arrival.

Chapter 390: Huge City

A moment later, the black dot in the distance gradually grew larger as he approached, slowly revealing a vast black shadow. Although he still couldn't see it clearly, its prominent silhouette left Han Li awed by its astonishing magnificence.

When Han Li flew somewhat closer, he was able to roughly make out the contents of the shadow. It was a city, an enormous city that spanned the entire island.

But what caused Han Li the greatest astonishment was that the city was entirely different than those he had seen before. It wasn't laid out on flat land; instead, the sky towering mountain at the center of the island serve as the foundation and the buildings were built in concentric circles around it.

The bottom of the huge mountain had rows and rows of buildings that spanned to the very edges of the island without a single gap.

This was without a doubt Heavenly Star City, the largest city in the Scattered Star Seas.

From the sky, the densely packed buildings appeared as small as ants. The scene left him shocked until he was about twenty kilometers away from the island, at which point he was forced to slow down his Divine Wind Boat.

Han Li was no longer alone in the nearby sky. Streaks of light far

and near started to occasionally appear, flying towards Heavenly Star City.

Han Li inwardly sighed. Heavenly Star City's reputation was well deserved. Even at such a far distance away, he saw many cultivators.

Once he was about ten kilometers away, there were an even greater number of various colored lights flying about. He even saw a few huge ships beneath him, cutting through the wind and waves.

But what rendered him speechless were the cultivators that chose to sail on small boats or even ride on low grade demon beasts on the sea instead of flying on a magic tool.

Han Li shook his head. After recovering from his awe, he accelerated into a streak of light. After a short moment, arrived at the shore of Heavenly Star Island.

He had now discovered that the island was surrounded by a lofty stone wall about a hundred meters high. Han Li was also able to make out that the expansive sea walls had over a dozen gates of various sizes.

While there were ports intended for mortal ships and bays for resting demon beasts, the obvious majority of incoming traffic, the lone cultivators, entered the city through the small gates. As such, Han Li flew towards a small city gate in a streak of azure light.

Although it was one of the smaller gates, when Han Li neared it, he saw that the gate was over twenty four meters tall and couldn't help but laugh at himself with a faint smile.

In front of Han Li stood a dignified, azure-clothed woman whose cultivation seemed to be mid Foundation Establishment. Standing beneath the city gate, she was elegantly speaking to two white-clothed cultivators. After she handed over a few spirit stones, she casually donned a blue ring they had given her and entered the city with light steps.

Han Li then calmly walked over with Crooked Soul.

“Do you two plan to temporarily stay here or do you plan to take long term residence? If... Huh! So it turned out to be a senior! Senior, welcome to Heavenly Star City! According to the laws of the city, Core Formation cultivators are allowed free long term residence in the city. This is an identity ring. Please carefully hold onto it!”

The white clothed cultivator started speaking without blinking, but halfway through, he realized Crooked Soul was a Core Formation cultivator and hastily took something out from his sleeve. After sizing up Crooked Soul in surprise, he hastily spoke with a respectful tone and handed a red ring over to him.

“This is my first time coming to Heavenly Star City. What is this ring for?” Crooked Soul said with a coarse voice.

“The spirit ring is the certification of your status. Cultivators

that only stay here temporarily wear a blue ring and only have to pay three spirit stones for entry. The spirit light on a blue ring only persists for seven days. Afterwards, the ring's wearer would have to leave Heavenly Star City or go to the city gates and get a new one. Red rings are for cultivators that take permanent residence. Ordinary cultivators are required to pay eight hundred spirit stones for it. The red ring's spirit light is everlasting and will memorize its owner once it absorbs their blood essence. As it will only shine for its owner, there is no need to worry that others might steal it." The white-clothed early Foundation Establishment cultivator gave Crooked Soul a neutral explanation and raised his hand to reveal a shining red ring on his finger similar to the one in his palm.

Crooked Soul silently nodded his head and took the ring, he then dripped his blood essence on it after some slight hesitation and placed it on his finger.

"I must trouble Fellow Daoist to give me a red ring! I also plan on staying in this city for quite some time." With a smile, Han Li took out eight hundred spirit stones from his storage pouch and offered it to one of the cultivators.

The two white-clothed cultivators appeared somewhat surprised, but wordlessly took the spirit stones and handed Han Li a red ring.

Han Li also dripped his blood essence onto the ring and wore it before entering the city with Crooked Soul.

The streets past the gate couldn't be considered either narrow or wide. It was more than wide enough for four people to walk

through at once or perhaps two carriages. The side of the streets were lined with rows of limestone buildings. From a glance, one could tell they were mortal stores, and they had nothing worth seeing.

There didn't seem to be any cultivators on the streets with only a few mortals shopping and chatting; there was nothing present caught Han Li's interest.

After a quick examination, he casually lifted his head to look at the sky and saw that a great number of lights were flying about, each indicating a cultivator soaring on their magic tool.

The largest city in the Scattered Star Seas actually didn't have any air restrictions! It was going to make things quite easy for him and Crooked Soul. Han Li then took out his Divine Wind Boat and intended to take off before being interrupted.

“Sir Immortals, please wait!” A man from the side of the street shouted out, walking out from a store and respectfully saluting them. He was a lean man with a slanted mustache.

The two took a thorough look at him but found that he was a mortal that completely lacked magic power fluctuations.

Han Li revealed slight astonishment and asked with a slight frown, “What's the matter? Have I met you before?”

The lean man spoke with a wide smile, “Hehe! My name is Lu Er,

and this is my first time meeting these two Immortal Masters.”

Having heard this, Han Li’s expression darkened as he revealed displeasure. But without waiting for Han Li to speak, Lu Er hastily said, “This is your first time arriving at Heavenly Star City, yes? Certainly, these Immortal Masters are quite unfamiliar with the roads and circumstances of the city. Since I am a native, I know this city as well as the back of my hand. If these two Immortal Masters want to go somewhere or want to know where to handle their business, I could save Immortal Masters quite some trouble if I were to guide the way. My assistance only requires the payment of two spirit stones.”

With that said, Lu Er gazed at Han Li with an expectant expression. He seemed to have already made out that the youth was the master of the two.

Han Li faintly smiled and replied, “So it’s Lu Er? If your assistance is to my satisfaction, I will give you five spirit stones! But if you waste my time, I won’t give you a single one!” Then with a mysterious smile, Han Li boarded the Divine Wind Boat without paying Lu Er any further attention.

As Han Li stood on his boat, he gazed at Lu Er to the side.

At this moment, the mortal’s face incessantly shifted between dark and clear. After he saw Han Li gazing at him, he silently gritted his teeth and said, “Alright! I will follow Immortal Master! I will definitely satisfy the Immortal Masters’ expectations.”

Han Li faintly nodded his head indifferently and tapped his Divine Wind Boat, immediately sinking it close to the ground. Having seen this, Lu Er hastily boarded and carefully stood on it.

Soon after, the Divine Wind Boat slowly soared and flew towards the huge mountain at the center of the island.

After flying for about a hundred meters through the sky, Han Li turned his head towards Lu Er. He saw that although his face revealed slight fear, he didn't show any signs of difficulty or intolerance. Inwardly nodding his head, Han Li casually asked, "It seems this isn't the first time you've flown on a magic tool. Do you frequently act as a guide for foreign cultivators?"

"Previously, I've assisted six Immortal Masters. However, this is only my second time flying." Lu Er spoke with a forced smile. The wind at a hundred meters in the air proved to be a bit too strong for a mortal.

Having seen that Lu Er's expression had turned slightly green, Han Li faintly smiled and raised his hand. With a flash of blue light, a layer of blue mist covered the entirety of the Divine Wind Boat, protecting the three. Lu Er's complexion immediately improved afterwards.

But without waiting for Lu Er to say any thanks, Han Li inquired, "First of all, tell me where I can find a place to cultivate in peace."

Chapter 391: A New Home

Lu Er blankly stared for a moment before involuntarily turning his gaze to the hands of Han Li and Crooked Soul.

Having seen their red rings, he revealed a flash of sudden insight and gave Han Li a thorough explanation, “So it turned out you Immortal Masters intend to take up long term residence! This matter is quite simple. Do you Immortal Masters see that building on Sage Mountain? If you wish to cultivate, you only have to go to there and rent a building. I’ve heard other Immortal Masters say that a natural spirit vein flows through Sage Mountain. The higher the building, the greater the amount of Spiritual Qi. Of course, the price increases as well. If you don’t wish to rent a building and want your own personal cave residence instead, it will cost far more than renting an ordinary residence! Furthermore, regardless of whether it is a building or a cave, you will have to pay a fee every hundred years. If you do not pay when the time comes, the Star Palace will repossess the residence by force.”

“Oh, so long as I have enough spirit stones, I’ll be able to rent a cultivation area at the highest height?” Han Li revealed an interested expression.

Lu Er shook his head as if he were beating a drum with it and spoke with embarrassment, “Immortal Master jests, that obviously isn’t possible. Every circle of buildings on Sage Mountain is considered a layer, coming to a total of eighty-one layers. The first fifty layers are open to foreign cultivators and can be rented as a cultivation residence so long as one has the spirit stones. The last thirty layers are reserved for the elders of the Star Palace. As for the last layer, that is where the Sage’s Palace two Lord Sages live.

Nobody is allowed to enter.”

After a moment of thought, Han Li decisively said, “Fine, point the way! Let’s find a residence first before anything else.”

“Yes, your subordinate follows your orders. Immortal Master should fly towards the base of the mountain. The buildings there take care of these matters.”

Just as he finished speaking, the Divine Wind Boat turned into a streak of white light and flew towards the huge, distant mountain.

The huge mountain had appeared somewhat near but it still took a quarter hour of full speed flight to reach the base of the mountain. Under the guidance of Lu Er, the Divine Wind Boat descended in front of an imposing pavilion.

There were quite a few cultivators coming and going, occasionally flying off or landing with flashes of light.

After a quick examination of the area, he brought Crooked Soul and Lu Er to the towering pavilion.

Upon entering, Han Li saw over a dozen cultivators. Six of them were sitting alone at a couple of stone desks while talking with cultivators wearing white clothes. The white clothed cultivators appeared miserable and two of them were even pitifully begging. It made for a rather interesting scene as not a single one of their expressions were the same.

Han Li silently watched the scene from the side.

“Sir Immortal, there is no one at the desk over there. Should we go over?” After a short moment, Lu Er carefully called out to Han Li. Han Li turned his gaze towards the recently cleared stone desk and nodded his head.

But as Crooked Soul was the one to lead this time, Lu Er was left bewildered as he had recognized Han Li to be the master.

“Senior wishes to rent a residence at Sage Mountain? Which layer would you like? The higher the layer, the more expensive it will be!” The Star Palace cultivator examined Crooked Soul for a moment before speaking with a respectful tone.

It seemed that Core Formation cultivators were seen with veneration regardless of the location. This was the reason why Han Li had Crooked Soul step forward.

“I want a cave dwelling. Are there any available? The higher the layer, the better!” Crooked Soul expressionlessly said.

“Cave dwelling? Senior is quite wealthy. I’ll go take a look.” Having heard Crooked Soul’s arrogant tone, the white-clothed cultivator hastily took out a jade slip and started to search through it.

“I got it! There are three caves on the thirty-first layer, four caves

on the thirty-ninth layer, and two caves on the forty-seventh layer. Here are the prices of the cave residences as well as their floor plans and capabilities.” The white-clothed cultivator then place several jade slips onto the stone table.

When Crooked Soul heard this, he bluntly took the jade slips on the table and looked through them with his spiritual sense.

Han Li had believed that since he wasn't lacking in spirit stones and that he could be considered somewhat wealthy among Core Formation cultivators, he would be able to afford the cost of a cave residence. But once he looked at the prices, he felt his heart drop.

The cost of a cave residence at the thirty-ninth layer left Han Li feeling heartache, not to mention the forty-seventh layer cave. Also, these were just the costs of merely a hundred years of use. The price went up to three thousand spirit stones, a price that was far beyond reason!

Having seen Crooked Soul become silent, the cultivator seemed to have guessed what he was thinking. He explained with a smile, “Senior! Although we don't dare to call Sage Mountain's spirit vein the best in the Scattered Star Seas, it is undoubtedly in the top five. Cultivating at even the base of Sage Mountain is far faster than the best spot at an ordinary spirit vein. As for each layer above the thirtieth, cultivation speeds increase by an entire fourth. As such, the expensive price is completely worth it!”

Han Li frowned in response and had Crooked Soul read through the jade slips once more.

“I’ll have this one!” Under Han Li’s command, Crooked Soul handed over the jade slips and indicated a more capable cave residence on the thirty-ninth layer.

As Crooked Soul wanted to rent an expensive cave dwelling, the white clothed cultivator swiftly responded in excitement, “Understood, that will cost two thousand seven hundred spirit stones!”

This time, Han Li didn’t have Crooked Soul act. He personally took out twenty-seven mid-grade spirit stones and handed them over.

“This is the cave residence’s authority medallion. It allows you to enter and leave the cave residence at will, but after a hundred years, the medallion will be revoked. Please carefully take care of it.” After taking the spirit stones, he took out a yellow medallion and handed it over to Crooked Soul.

After taking the medallion, Crooked Soul wordlessly turned around and left.

Han Li and Lu Er, who hadn’t dared to speak, closely followed him out.

“A truly astonishing price! It actually cost that many spirit stones to secure a cultivation area.” After walking out of the pavilion, Han Li let out a long sigh before muttering to himself. This purchase had consumed a significant portion of his fortune.

Lu Er stole a look at Han Li and asked with a whisper, “Is there anywhere else that you two Immortal Masters wish to go?” He had been greatly shocked when Han Li had spent such a huge quantity of spirit stones. Although he had seen other cultivators act as such when he had guided them, they only spent several tens of spirit stones at most. This was the first time he had seen such a big spender who could spend nearly three thousand spirit stones in one sitting.

Suddenly, Lu Er became even more respectful towards Han Li, now confident that he could potentially acquire an even greater reward. After all, Han Li spent money quite liberally. So long as Lu Er satisfied him, he was certain he wouldn’t short him any spirit stones.

Han Li quickly glanced at Lu Er and casually said, “Guide me to the city’s market and give me an introduction of the larger stores.”

Afterwards, the Divine Wind Boat soared through the sky in a streak of light.

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Half a day later, Han Li was lying on a large wooden bed with his hands cushioning the back of his head.

Not long before, Lu Er had given him an introduction of the most important locations in Heavenly Star City. They then parted ways after Han Li gave Lu Er his payment. Having seen Lu Er depart

with a delighted expression, Han Li returned to the cave residence on the thirty-ninth layer that he had paid an enormous sum for.

The cave residence exactly matched what was described in the jade talisman. Not only was it isolated and peaceful, but it also had a large medicine garden. But what was most to Han Li's satisfaction was the abundant Spiritual Qi present. As described, the spirit vein in the mountain was truly beyond ordinary. His old cave residence in the Heavenly South Region couldn't possibly compare. All of these benefits left Han Li feeling satisfied with his purchase.

The cave residence's formation spell was extremely impressive. It was no weaker than the simplified Five Elements Reversal Formation.

Although this was the case, Han Li didn't feel at ease with just the cave's formation spell protecting him. He decided to have a short rest and would place down several of his formations tomorrow. After he finally felt his home was secure, he would have time to make plans for his future cultivation.

With that thought, Han Li unwittingly fell sound asleep. He had been flying nonstop these last few months and was truly quite tired.

On the morning of the second day, Han Li started to busy himself after waking up.

He laid down three great formations outside of his cave

residence, and planted all kinds of spiritual herbs in the empty medicine garden for future maturation. Lastly, he went into the market city and bought a large amount of high-quality fine jade. After returning to his cave residence, he embedded the fine jade into every inch of a hidden, forty-meter wide room.

After all the surfaces of the hidden room were completely covered in jade, Han Li carefully released the Gold Devouring Beetles into the room.

He held high expectations towards these high ranking wondrous bugs and planned to train them well so they could assist him in the future.

Chapter 392: Raising Bugs

Although Gold Devouring Beetles were among the highest ranked exotic insects, the Controlling Spirit Sect cultivator's jade slip mentioned that their physical power is very limited; only by relying on its superior numbers would it be able to prevail. If the swarm only contained a dozen or even thirty of them, they wouldn't be too useful once they reached adulthood. Only if they were in a swarm numbering by a hundred thousand or several hundred thousands would they be able to display power genuinely worthy of their rank.

Imagining the scene of countless beetles blotting the sky and murdering without end, Han Li involuntarily shivered.

He now intended to quickly raise the Gold Devouring Beetles and have them bear descendants to increase their number.

However, this was easier said than done. The Gold Devouring Beetles had only existed in ancient times in the Heavenly South Region and were currently extinct there. As such, the concrete details of their breeding had disappeared countless generations ago. The information contained in the Controlling Spirit Sect cultivator's jade slip only had the insect's characteristics as described by ancient records. Since there weren't any detailed methods of raising them, Han Li was left vexed for quite a while.

In fact, not only were the Gold Devouring Beetles currently extinct, it seemed that the thirty top ranked exotic insects were extinct from the cultivation world as well. It was only because that Controlling Spirit Sect cultivator was a bug fanatic that he had

scoured and analysed ancient records that he arranged the exotic insects on a list. As for how reliable the front end rankings were for the exotic insects, only the Heavens knew!

It was only by coincidence that Han Li was able to obtain the Gold Devouring Beetles, a species that should've been extinct. As these Gold Devouring Beetles from some unknown reason had just hatched, it seemed that they had been in suspended animation on Minor Expanse Island since ancient times for some unknown reason.

It was reasonable to say that mountain-splitting earthquakes and torrential storms had been unable to awaken the exotic insects. However, it seemed that the congregation of exotic insects that Han Li brought with him after building his cave residence had resulted in the beetles' miraculous awakening. The scent of Han Li's various insects must slowly trickled down and aroused the appetite of the swarm of Gold Devouring Beetles.

Originally, they should've attack Han Li's exotic insects sooner, but Han Li's Bloodjade Spiders were there. As they were fearful of their natural predator, they didn't dare to venture too closely to Han Li's cave residence. Thus, they had stayed hidden on Minor Expanse island while rigidly staring at Han Li's cave.

On his last trip, Han Li had brought along his Bloodjade Spiders, allowing the Gold Devouring Beetles to emerge. From what Han Li saw, after those Gold Devouring Beetles ate all his exotic insects, they settled their nest into the cave's medicine garden. With Han Li's stealthy return, he was able to capture them in one sitting.

Since Han Li didn't have knowledge about raising these insects, he could only approach it slowly and fumble about.

First, Han Li tried throwing in bug food of all kinds into the room, resulting in the several hundreds of Gold Devouring Beetles immediately ravaging them. Han Li was delighted to find that they weren't picky with their food.

However, Han Li's happiness only persisted for a few months. After feeding the beetles a great amount of food, he discovered they hadn't matured in the slightest. Han Li felt quite gloomy and was forced to think of a different method.

As these beetles loved to eat the five metals and Spiritual Qi, Han Li fed them metallic items of each type separately and a few low grade spirit stones. After devouring them, these beetles didn't show the slightest change, and Han Li deemed it to be another failure.

Extremely disheartened, Han Li bluntly threw the lifeless eggs that he had acquired from the Golden Back Mantis into the beetle room. After eating these, the beetles finally started to display a change in their Spiritual Qi and appeared to be far more violent.

While this caused Han Li to be pleasantly surprised, he also became rather worried. Could it be that these Gold Devouring Beetles would only mature after eating other exotic insects? That would be a greatly difficult problem, as he had no other exotic insects other than his Bloodjade spiders.

Helpless, Han Li bought bloody hog and sheep meat and threw it into their room. Apart from causing these Gold Devouring Beetles to become even more vicious, they didn't show any signs of maturing in the slightest.

With no other choice, Han Li gradually matured enough spiritual herbs and started to refine Spirit Feed Pills.

Previously, Han Li had only refined pills to further progress his own magic power, so it would be his first time refining this pill.

A few days later, he had successfully refined his first Spirit Feed Pills. Han Li immediately fed the Gold Devouring Beetles and his two Bloodjade spiders a portion of the pills. The results left Han Li both overjoyed and worried.

He was happy that the spirit pills had a beneficial effect on both demon beasts and exotic insects. Unfortunately, he grew worried after seeing that the changes that occurred to the Gold Devouring Beetles and the Bloodjade Spider were extremely different.

He fed both the two Bloodjade Spiders five Spirit Feed Pills each. The next day, their Spiritual Qi had grown by a small but obvious amount. As for the Gold Devouring Beetles, Han Li had fed them many pills but the effects could only be described as negligible. They only experienced a sliver of growth.

He estimated that because the number of Gold Devouring Beetles was far too great, their growth was much lesser. This method wouldn't be capable of causing any large benefits.

This swarm only numbered in the several hundreds. When he thought of the several tens of thousands he would need to display their true strength, Han Li lost confidence in continuing to raise these bugs.

Having come to this conclusion, Han Li lost interest in raising the Gold Devouring Beetles and fed the remaining Spirit Feed Pills to his Bloodjade spiders. As for the beetles, he fed them a bit of insect feed every day.

At this point, Han Li had already spent half a year in Heavenly Star City.

In addition to rearing his bugs, Han Li shut himself in seclusion and madly refined grade two puppets and all sorts of talismans.

As Han Li hadn't yet reached Core Formation, he was unable to grasp any intermediate magic techniques or refine any intermediate talismans as a result. After creating such a large amount of talismans, he acquired the benefit of having a high success rate in crafting low-grade talismans. Han Li had a success rate close to fifty percent for even high-grade talismans, allowing him to save a large amount of materials.

Several hundred years old ironwood was the main ingredient in crafting grade two puppets. Since Han Li could quickly mature the ironwood, his cost when making a puppet was decreased by over half.

For the souls that were required to refine the puppets, the Emperor of Yue's Soul Congregation Bowl contained many feral souls that had long lost their intelligence. He bluntly made use of them as they no longer held any intelligence and had lost their qualifications for reincarnation as a result. As such, he could only regard them as common refinement materials.

After finally crafting about two hundred puppets of the same model, Han Li was left extremely satisfied. However, the creation of these puppets had consumed a significant number of Han Li's spirit stones. Although the cost of creating a single puppet couldn't be considered large, the cost of successfully creating two hundred puppets with the addition of the cost of the materials lost during failed attempts could leave one speechless.

By this time, Han Li had now been in seclusion for two entire years.

During these two years, Han Li fed his Bloodjade spiders with Spirit Feed Pills. With the assistance of strong medicinal power, the two demon beasts ascended in rank, becoming peak grade one demon beasts.

During this time, Crooked Soul had almost completely refined the "Immemorial Bowl". Although he wasn't the magic treasure's creator and was thereby unable to merge his mind with it, he was eventually able to absorb it into his body and display seventy percent of its power.

Han Li had previously thought about having Crooked Soul create his own magic treasure, but the materials for crafting magic

treasures are truly costly. With his remaining spirit stones, Han Li feared that he wouldn't be able to acquire even the most common materials for a magic treasure. In addition, magic treasures aren't something that can be created in a short amount of time within one's soul. At the very least, it would take thirty years of bitter effort before it could display the early stages of its might, but Han Li didn't have such time to waste!

His most pressing need was to acquire a large amount of demon beast cores so that he may refine spirit medicines in preparations for the second cycle of the Three Essence Revolutions Technique.

His actions in seclusion, whether it be raising his exotic insects or refining a great amount of puppets, were all preparations for demon beast hunting. Han Li wondered if they would be capable of hunting grade five demon beasts without much difficulty with Crooked Soul acting as the main force, along with the assistance of his puppets, Bloodjade Spiders, spell formations, and Han Li himself.

With this in mind, Han Li finally left his cave residence and brought Crooked Soul with him to Heavenly Star City. Since he wanted to go to the Outer Star Seas and hunt high grade demon beasts, he naturally required information on the demon beasts and the area where the transportation formation would take him. As such, he went to the city market hoping to get what he needed.

Heavenly Star City's market was located on the first layer of Sage Mountain, and was so huge it occupied at least half of the first layer if not more.

The scope of the daily trading of materials and magic tools at this market was far greater and more prosperous than any market city Han Li had previously seen.

Chapter 393: Deep Jade Island

During the last two years, Han Li had left seclusion several times to replenish his puppet crafting materials. Because he had been such a big spender during these trips, many store owners had become quite familiar with his face. After acquiring the information he wanted from the shopkeepers with a few inquiries, Han Li went to a bookstore called the White Gate Pavilion.

As expected, the store contained collections information on all of the demon beasts currently known in the Scattered Star Seas. Han Li's spirits were roused and he acquired a copy of this information for over a thousand spirit stones. As for the information on the Demon Beast Islands in the Outer Star Seas, Han Li found it in an unremarkable small store.

Since his objectives had been achieved, Han Li intended to return to his cave dwelling, but on the way back, he came across a shop that specialized in selling storage pouches and spirit beast pouches.

Currently, he carried far too many items on his person. With his two hundred puppet beasts occupying four of his storage pouches, he found it inconvenient to use them. Furthermore, since he planned to go out to sea to hunt demon beasts, he would need more space to collect their valuable body parts in addition to their demon cores. It would be far too wasteful to just throw them away, so it was only natural that he'd want to prepare a few storage pouches with a larger capacity.

An hour later, Han Li left the shop feeling slight heartache after having spent over a thousand spirit stones on two high capacity

storage pouches. Since they had nearly ten times the capacity of his previous storage pouches, they should prove to be sufficient.

Afterwards, Han Li passed by the “Lavish Cheer Auction House”, the top ranked auction in Heavenly Star City, and couldn’t help but take a look inside.

The details of the items up for auction left Han Li feeling truly covetous. Not only were there grade six demon cores, but they also had high grade materials for magic treasure refinement, not to mention many rare goods that he had never heard of before.

Unfortunately, while the items in this auction were good, cultivators such as Han Li, with only a few thousand spirit stones on hand, couldn’t afford to buy anything. This was because after any rare items entered an auction hall, their price would likely increase by over half the original value.

Spirit herbs that were over a thousand years old were rare and could be auctioned off at a high price, but Han Li didn’t wish to attract any problems. After all, he may feel as if he was lacking spirit stones, but it wasn’t to the stage where he was a desperate level of poverty. As such, it would be better to avoid any unnecessary trouble.

After glancing at the overly expensive auctioned goods, Han Li returned to his cave residence.

A month later, Han Li had finished getting all of his affairs in order. During that time, he had particularly studied the properties

and weaknesses of the Outer Star Sea demon beasts and came up with appropriate plans of action upon encountering any of them.

But one day, Han Li suddenly bursted out laughing and was dancing with joy as he held a jade slip in hand. Then with a faceful of excitement, he quickly ran out of his cave residence and flew out toward the city market.

In the blink of an eye, half a year had passed. Han Li and Crooked Soul appeared in the Heavenly Star City's fiftieth layer district, standing in front of a large hall made entirely of marble. A huge ten-meter-long signboard hung up above with the golden words, "Starry Sky Palace". There wasn't anybody else present outside the hall.

Han Li calmly walked inside with Crooked Soul in tow. After passing through a small, short corridor, his view opened to a spacious hall that was over seventy meters wide and tall.

Within the hall, there were four male and one female cultivator chatting with a white-clothed cultivator of the Star Palace. Several transportation formations of equivalent size were lined up behind them. A small stone tabled lay in front of each of the transportation formations with the name of the transportation formation's destination.

Han Li didn't pay further attention to the transportation formation, and instead swept his spiritual sense past the other cultivators. What he found left him shocked. Half of those present were Core Formation cultivators, and the other half were late Foundation Establishment cultivators.

After Han Li and Crooked soul entered, the six glanced at them with slight surprise.

The white-clothed Core Formation cultivator recovered quickly despite appearing somewhat puzzled by the appearance of Crooked Soul and Han Li. The other five revealed joy upon seeing the two arrive.

“These two Fellow Daoists also wish to go to the Demon Beast Islands? How about joining us in using the same teleportation and splitting the cost?” The charming woman that appeared thirty-years-old suddenly spoke with a sweet smile.

Han Li stared blankly for a moment and didn’t immediately respond. Instead, he looked at the white-clothed cultivator in charge of the formation and asked with slight confusion, “Senior, will that be acceptable?”

“Of course, use of the transportation formation is charged based on the number of activations not by the quantity of people. Regardless of whether it is a single person or seven people, the cost will still be seven hundred spirit stones. However, only a maximum of seven people can be teleported in a single instance.” The white-clothed cultivator spoke indifferently.

Han Li respectfully thanked him for his explanation, and then turned his head towards the woman, asking her with a smile, “Have you decided which Demon Beast Island you intend to go to? My Martial Uncle and I wish to head to Deep Jade Island!”

“Deep Jade Island?” The woman was startled for a moment. After glancing at the several people behind her she immediately replied with a chuckle, “What a coincidence! We also planned on heading towards Deep Jade Island!”

Han Li’s expression didn’t change but he inwardly sneered. ‘A coincidence?’ These people obviously didn’t care which Demon Beast Island they went to. But since Han Li could save on spirit stones, he nodded his head in agreement.

After each of the group members handed over a hundred spirit stones to the white-clothed cultivator, they all stood in the transportation formation for “Deep Jade Island”. The white-clothed cultivator then handed each of them a transportation talisman to place on their body. It seemed that this talisman had an effect similar to the Greater Displacement Medallion, preventing any mishaps from occurring due to long distance teleportation.

Although the talisman could provide protection for long distance teleportation, it was only effective up to a certain distance and could only be used once. The Greater Displacement Medallion was far superior by comparison. But even so, the talisman was still considered a rare item that could only be created by the talisman masters of the Star Palace. They weren’t for sale on the outside.

Han Li felt somewhat nervous as the spirit stones around the transportation formation flashed with blinding white light.

After the light faded away, Han Li and the others found themselves within a simple stone room, indicating that the teleportation had succeeded without a problem! In addition to the seven new arrivals, an expressionless Star Palace cultivator also stood in the room.

The Star Palace cultivator was only a mid Foundation Establishment cultivator and was sitting in a corner of the room in meditation. After indifferently glancing at Han Li and the others when the teleportation finished, he closed his eyes once more without any intention of further paying them attention.

Han Li felt a slightly unordinary Spiritual Qi fluctuation in the room. It seemed to originate from the formation spell's restrictions that enshrouded the room.

The stone room had a large, half-open door. Through its opening, faint chatter could be heard from the outside, and the occasional silhouette could be seen passing by.

While Han Li looked around the room in curiosity, the others walked out of the formation while minding their own business. But suddenly, an aged Core Formation cultivator with a face as red as ripe jujubes suddenly turned around and asked, "Are you Fellow Daoist interested in joining hands with us? We'll split the spirit stones evenly after selling off the demon cores."

"There is no need. My Martial Nephew and I have different plans. Please take care of yourselves!" Crooked Soul's ugly face remained expressionless while declining the proposal.

The old man revealed slight disappointment at the refusal and sighed, saying, “That is truly a pity! If Fellow Daoist were to join me, we’d have no problem hunting grade six demon beasts.”

“Since it appears that this is the first time you two have visited a Demon Beast Island, I’ll give you two a word of advice. Not only must you be wary of high grade demon beasts here, but you should also be careful of ambushes from evil cultivators. If that happened, it would be better to be traveling in a group. If you have a change of heart, we will happily welcome you.”

Han Li remained silent for a moment before bringing Crooked Soul out of the room with a chuckle.

‘What’s this?’ Han Li looked around in astonishment.

It wouldn’t be wrong to say that this place had small streets everywhere, because there were businesses of all kinds scattered about, selling talismans, magic tools, assorted goods, or even purchasing depots. Each of the stores also had a shopkeeper lazily sitting inside.

These stores were also quite crudely constructed. They weren’t built with stone but with wooden logs instead. As they were truly simple as can be Han Li doubted whether the stores would still be standing after a strong gust of wind.

Moreover, these so-called streets spread outwards with the transportation formation’s stone room as the center. They were

carelessly arranged and scattered in every direction, leaving orderly observers feeling unwell upon sight.

Chapter 394: Cultivators And Demon Beasts On A Small Island

The most puzzling thing to Han Li was the silence that spread throughout the streets. There wasn't a single person outside of the stores.

After murmuring to himself for a moment, he silently smiled. How could he have forgotten! This place wasn't nearly as leisurely as the Inner Star Seas. The courageous new arrivals to these islands were at mid Foundation Establishment at the very least. They should all be out hunting demon beasts!

Han Li then lifted his head and looked around, discovering that this place was actually built with its back to a small mountain.

Han Li pondered for a moment before walking towards the general goods store built from rubble.

"Are there any new sea maps of the nearby area?" Before Han Li arrived, he had learned that the sea maps of the Demon Beast Islands were constantly being replaced and that the newest maps were the most useful.

"We do! We have general maps and detailed maps. Which type would Senior like?" The shopkeeper of the general goods store was a middle-aged Qi Condensation cultivator. He gave an enthusiastic reply after they came over and asked him a question.

“The detailed map!” Han Li answered instantly.

“The detailed map costs one hundred spirit stones!” The middle-aged man stated boldly.

“One hundred?” Han Li felt that he had misheard, but his face soon darkened and revealed fury. Although he didn’t intend to provoke any problems, he wasn’t going to allow himself to be swindled by a low-grade cultivator.

“Senior shouldn’t misunderstand. This price wasn’t decided by me, but by my superiors. I am only obeying orders. In addition, other cultivators sell us the new maps at a high price as well!” In response to Han Li’s gloomy expression, he gave an explanation with his own complaints rather than expressing fear.

“Your superiors? What merchant union do you belong to?” Han Li asked with a frown after his anger had somewhat subsided. He clearly understood that small shops weren’t capable of conducting business on the Demon Beast Islands. This might even be a branch of the Four Elements Merchant Union.

After a short pause, the middle-aged man replied with a smile, “Hehe, Senior sure is knowledgeable. Junior is an underling of the Lavish Cheer Merchant Union.”

“The same Lavish Cheer Union that established the Lavish Cheer Auction House in Heavenly Star City, and is a member of the Four Elements Merchant Union?”

“That’s right, Senior!”

Without any further bickering, Han Li bluntly threw a mid-grade spirit stone his way. The shopkeeper then let out a chuckle and handed a jade slip over to Han Li.

Han Li glanced at the other shops before taking the jade slip and moodily asking, “Are the other stores also part of your Lavish Cheer Merchant Union?”

“How could that possibly be? Apart from the purchasing depot in the west, the other businesses were all established by different merchant unions and have no relation to ours.” The middle-aged man glanced at the other stores and spoke with slight hostility.

Having heard this, Han Li turned around and left with Crooked Soul without any further words.

Just as he thought to fly off on his Divine Wind Boat, a streak of green light fell from the sky and landed in front of the purchasing depot. The light faded away to reveal a tall and burly Core Formation cultivator.

“Youngster Fan, you’ve got business!” The large man loudly yelled towards the store after arriving. He then took out a storage pouch from his chest and threw it on the floor. With a whirl of rainbow radiance, the ten meter corpse of a monstrous fish appeared on the ground.

Although it was said to be a fish, the only fish-like thing about it were the green scales on its body. It had a python's head and huge claws on its abdomen, and there was a bloody hole on its upper back; it seemed its demon core had already been ripped out.

“Ah! Senior Hao has arrived! This Jadescale Demon Fish is quite hard to kill. Only Senior's truly remarkable skill would be able to kill it!” A Qi Condensation youth quickly ran out from the store and examined the demon corpse with quick eyes and clever mind. As he incessantly praised the large man, the large man heartily laughed. The man seemed to be a heroic figure.

He suddenly turned around to face Han Li and Crooked Soul. After examining them for a moment, he candidly yelled out to them, “Your faces are unfamiliar! You must've just arrived! Do you wish to hunt demon beasts together?”

Seeing that the large man was so cordial, Han Li silently smiled but had Crooked Soul shake his head in refusal.

The large man revealed a trace of disappointment, but enthusiastically continued, “I am Hao Yuantian and am somewhat well-known on Deep Jade Island. If you change your mind, come find me.” With that said, the large man took a pouch of spirit stones from the youth and looked at it before energetically flying off in a streak of green light.

Han Li stood in his original spot while silently pondering.

Both the red-faced Core Formation cultivator as well as the large

man surnamed Hao had invited him to join them. Quite a number of Core Formation cultivators had arrived on Deep Jade Island and formed their own groups; even Core Formation cultivators traveled in groups so that they may hunt demon beasts in safety. Han Li had already known about this from his research. If he didn't have his own plans in mind, it was likely he would've agreed to one of their invitations.

Han Li carefully looked through the map on the jade slip he just bought while he flew his Divine Wind Boat towards the edge of the island.

Deep Jade Island wasn't very large, and after a short moment, Han Li had already arrived at the island's edge.

Han Li swept his gaze across his surroundings while standing at the front of his Divine Wind Boat. His eyes flashed with spirit, and he chose a direction as he flew deeper into the endless seas.

Han Li didn't dare to travel too close to the water as it was home to demon beasts with deep cultivation. Although those beasts concealed themselves at the seafloor, they would occasionally feed on any lifeforms that passed by above them. If any cultivators were to alarm one, they would almost certainly be consumed as well. As such, Han Li was extremely careful.

But in contrast, one couldn't fly at too high an altitude in the Outer Star Seas as the sea beasts weren't the only occupants. There were also bird-type demon beasts that habitually patrolled the seas from up above. Allowing oneself to enter their range of vision was extremely dangerous.

Of course, this wasn't always the case. Each of the sea territories had slightly different circumstances, and one's safety was never absolute. Every year, cultivators teleport to the Demon Beast Islands with dreams of hunting demon beasts for their cores, but a significant number of them never returned. There were even rumors of high grade demon beasts overcoming their Core Formation hunters and devouring them instead.

While there were clearly enormous profits to be had by hunting demon beasts in the Outer Star Seas, there was an equally high level of danger involved. As such, all cultivators who arrived on these islands would voluntarily form groups with their acquaintances and hunt together with the increased safety.

However, gathering together in large numbers to hunt was a taboo. Previously, all the cultivators on the Demon Beast Islands had hunted together. They were successful for a while before they had attracted the attention of a large group of demon beasts that were all grade seven and higher. Not only was the death toll terrifying, but the island was completely destroyed as well.

After these events repeated two additional times, no one else dared to gather together in groups past a certain size. Nowadays, they would gather together in groups of at most a dozen, creating many smaller groups around the island where high level cultivators were often roped in to join them.

With the previously mentioned information in mind, Han Li's expression immediately became sullen after flying from Deep Jade Island.

Not only did Han Li release his powerful spiritual sense, surrounding his body in a hundred meter radius, but he also propelled his Divine Wind Boat at its greatest speed and quickly flew through the air in a streak of white light.

Every six hours, Han Li would stop and confirm his direction as he was deeply fearful of getting lost and being unable to find his destination.

Han Li's luck was surprisingly quite good. On his way, he didn't encounter any trouble aside from an easily avoided grade five demon beast that was romping around in the distance.

After flying with periodic stops for three days, he eventually spotted a small fire-red island.

As flew closer, he saw that the island was created from an accumulation of scarlet coral. With the addition of the sparkling reflection of sunlight, it made for quite a beautiful sight!

Han Li stopped above the island and revealed a face of happiness.

Chapter 395: Rainbow Skirt Grass

“Red Coral Island! So this is the nearest coral island!”

Han Li stood on the Divine Wind Boat and muttered to himself for a moment. Afterwards, he flew in a large circle around the island and made sure that the coral island didn't have any cultivators or demon beasts nearby before slowly descending with Crooked Soul.

The small ring-shaped island was composed of coral rings of differing sizes.

Han Li stood on a smooth surface and ground his shoes against the ground to make fine, dark-red grains of dust. He then lifted his head to examine the topography of the island. A short moment later, he narrowed his eyes in contemplation.

Ordering Crooked Soul to stand guard near him, he suddenly set off to walk around the island.

Under Crooked Soul's protection, Han Li made a thorough inspection of the island's west and east coral rings. After making a full examination of the island, he even dove into the sea in the center of the island and didn't emerge until half a day later.

On the third day, Han Li completed his investigation and finally came to a decision.

He ordered Crooked Soul to place down his three great formations— the Five Elements Reversal Formation, the Fierce Heavenly Wind Formation, and the Illusory Heavensifting Formation— at his selected locations. The three formations all covered the center of Red Coral Island.

After placing down the three formations, Han Li additionally set up several small scale magic formations at the center of the Red Coral Island. With every direction sealed off from the center, it created an inescapable net.

Having done all of this, Han Li carefully examined his work and ensured that there was nothing he had overlooked. Then, he took out a jade box from his storage pouch and gently stroked it.

Han Li revealed a mysterious smile and slowly opened it, revealing a large medicinal herb that had thirteen leaves on its stalk. The leaves were completely curled up, making it appear quite peculiar.

Even more noteworthy was the white mist the plant carried that faintly released a rainbow light, making for a magnificent sight. It seemed to be of supernatural nature.

This was Han Li's greatest trump card, the "Rainbow Skirt Grass".

Although the herb wasn't common, it couldn't be considered a rarity either. This item was able to be found on coral reefs in the Scattered Star Seas. However, if one attempted to plant this in

ordinary soil, it would cause its surroundings to shine with color for one or two days before dying off. It was quite interesting.

What was most fascinating was that the color which shined would be the same as the environment it grew in, altering the color of its current location, whether it be blue, red, or any other color.

However, it didn't possess any significant medicinal effects for cultivators. Apart from its attractiveness, common cultivators would only view it as an ingredient used in some low grade medicine pills. However, "Rainbow Skirt Grass" had another name, "Demonlure Grass", and had previously caused a large amount of uproar in the cultivation world of the Scattered Star Seas.

At the time, an unknown cultivator had unexpectedly discovered that every hundred years, one of the thirteen curled leaves of this extremely beautiful medicinal herb would gradually unfold. Upon fully unfolding, it would release a strange scent that lasted an entire week.

The scent didn't have any effect on cultivators, but to the many demon beasts in the sea, it was an extremely enticing aroma. With the slightest smell, the demon beasts would instantly search for it, racing to be the first to find and devour its source.

In addition, the older the Rainbow Skirt Grass, the farther its scent traveled, and the more powerful the demon beasts it would attract.

It was said that a Nascent Soul expert had previously found a stalk of thousand year old Rainbow Skirt Grass in the depths of the Outer Star Seas that had just unfolded its eleventh leaf. As a result, this expert had personally seen several tens of grade six and grade seven demon beasts mount a simultaneous charge towards it, forcing the expert to flee.

When this was later made known in the cultivation world, many cultivators had thoughts of using this herb to lure demon beasts for easy hunting, as high grade cultivators would often go months in the Outer Star Seas without encountering a single demon beast.

Towards a majority of cultivators, grade five demon beasts were the best targets, as hunting grade six and seven demon beasts posed too great a risk of death. As for any demon beasts grade eight and higher, only old Nascent Soul eccentrics wouldn't flee at the sight of them. Anybody else would merely become demon beast food.

The number of demon beasts in the Outer Star Seas were truly great. However, they were truly difficult to find as they rarely ever left their concealment from the deep seas. Unless high level cultivators flew thousands of kilometers day by day over the ocean or possessed remarkable ability for searching the sea with their spiritual sense, roaming the Scattered Star Seas for half a year without encountering a demon beast was a very common occurrence.

After all, the Outer Star Seas were truly vast and the various demon beasts each had their own methods of concealment. It was quite easy to overlook them even when searching with spiritual

sense.

When it was discovered that Rainbow Skirt Grass could attract demon beasts, it caused quite an uproar. For a time, well-aged Rainbow Skirt Grass was quite precious.

However, it was soon discovered that this idea was but a mere fantasy. First of all, there was no method to predict the exact moment its leaves would uncurl. It is said to uncurl one of its leaves every hundred years, but there was often a variance of three or two years. As such, there was no way for cultivators to effectively make use of it while they were at sea.

Secondly, there was the depressing discovery that Rainbow Skirt Grass lost its ability to uncurl its leaves and release its unique scent a hundred years after being picked.

As such, any thoughts of transporting it to the Outer Star Seas were extinguished. As for its name as “Demonlure Grass”, it was quickly discarded, and it returned to being called “Rainbow Skirt Grass”.

When Han Li found this mocking, understated record in a jade slip, his eyes flashed with inspiration. The small bottle’s ability was just waiting to be combined with the spiritual herb!

He immediately purchased a stalk of Rainbow Skirt Grass from the city market and experimented with it in his cave residence. As a result, the Rainbow Skirt Grass gradually uncurled its leaf over the course of five days under the effects of the green liquid.

Afterwards, it released a strange scent that couldn't be described as either pleasant or foul, but it did leave quite the impression.

Doubtfully, Han Li placed his two Bloodjade spiders into the medicine garden. As a result, the two demon beasts immediately leapt towards the Rainbow Skirt Grass and completely devoured it without the slightest hesitation.

Soon after, the scent faded away and the two white spiders returned to normal.

While this result came as a pleasant surprise, he also felt worried about his Bloodjade Spiders. After carefully examining them for the next few days and finding that nothing strange had occurred, he finally felt relieved.

With this trump card in hand, he was suddenly filled with confidence in hunting demon beasts for their cores. After making another round of preparations, not only did Han Li bring a large amount of Rainbow Skirt Grass, but he also visited the many coral islands in Deep Jade Island's territory after arriving. After all, Rainbow Skirt Grass could only survive on coral islands.

As such, after laying down his inescapable net on Red Coral Island, he waited for the Rainbow Skirt Grass to mature and have demon beasts come knocking on his door.

Han Li had found an isolated coral reef in the sea at the center of the ring-shaped red coral island and planted his Rainbow Skirt Grass sprout on it.

Although he knew that the older the Rainbow Skirt Grass, the greater area of effect it would have, he started off with hundred year old Rainbow Skirt Grass to be safe.

Han Li took out a small bottle from his body and carefully dripped the green liquid onto the spirit herb. He then meditated on a nearby coral island with Crooked Soul by his side, both of them preserving their strength for what was to come.

Three days later, the Rainbow Skirt Grass had unfolded a leaf before Han Li's eyes and released a bizarre scent.

Han Li silently waved his hand. With a flash of radiance, glowing formation flags of various colors appeared embedded in the ground around him.

Han Li gazed at the formation flags for a moment before calmly closing his eyes once more. He had already decided that if no demon beasts appeared in the next few days, he would give the Rainbow Skirt Grass another drop of the green liquid and increase the range of its demon luring effect. With this, demon beasts were bound to visit.

Chapter 396: Hunting Demon Beasts For Cores

Han Li's worries were soon proven unfounded. A mere hour later, Han Li felt two huge Spiritual Qi fluctuations head towards the red coral island, one from the east and one from the west.

His expression changed and he suddenly opened his eyes, rigidly staring at the line of formation flags before him. Although he had already completed his preparations, he couldn't help but become nervous as two high grade demon beasts were coming at the same time.

Suddenly, a purple formation flag in front of him flashed with radiance and lightly trembled.

Han Li's expression grew solemn, but he didn't take any immediate action and only silently looked on. He knew that although a grade five demon beast could be considered intelligent, it wouldn't be able to break free from the Five Elements Reversal Formation only a moment after entering it. A grade five demon beast may possess similar cultivation to an early Core formation cultivator, but its fighting strength was almost always inferior to a cultivator of similar rank. After all, its intelligence was poor and it was capable of far too few magic techniques, allowing cultivators of similar strength to easily kill them. In addition, they would need quite some time to break through profound creations such as formation spells.

As such, Han Li felt at ease allowing one more demon beast to enter his magic formation before setting out to act.

Just as he was apprehensively thinking to himself, a yellow formation flag flashed with brilliance and released a soft hum. Suddenly, Han Li's solemn expression became somewhat happy. He then formed an incantation gesture with his hands and restricted the scent of the Rainbow Skirt Grass with the formations surrounding it.

After doing this, Han Li held out his bare hands, and two of the glowing formation flags flew into them with a single word, "Come!"

Behind him, Crooked Soul opened his mouth and spouted out a yellow radiance. The yellow radiance flourished, swirling around Han Li and carrying him off towards the sky in a yellow streak of light.

After a short moment, Han Li appeared above the westmost formation, the Illusory Heavensifting Formation. The formation's colorful green-yellow clouds were incessantly rolling, and an ox's roar could faintly be heard booming from within the formation.

Han Li then took out his Divine Wind Boat and had it fly away by itself.

He then took out the yellow formation flag and lightly waved it. The formation flag shot out a yellow beam of light towards the colorful clouds, causing them to vanish and reveal the demon beast within.

The demon beast was about ten meters long and had a round body surrounded by spikes of fire-red light. At first glance, it appeared to be a huge sea urchin. However, over thirty dark green eyes protruded from its body.

The eyes' gazes were ice-cold, and they shot out scarlet streaks of light in quick succession towards the formation. Its bull-like roar came from its fat abdomen and sounded as if it was violently irritated.

“Thousand Eyed Demon!” After seeing the demon beast's appearance, Han Li immediately recognized it and became somewhat interested.

As it was one of the most commonly seen grade five demon beasts in the Scattered Star Seas, it would make for good practice.

He didn't dare delay for long since this formation wasn't strong enough to endure much more of the demon's rampage. He immediately gave Crooked Soul an order.

After receiving the order, the yellow light enveloping Crooked Soul's body suddenly turned blood-red. He then brought his hands together and quickly separated them, shooting out a yellow crescent from his hand towards the Thousand Eyed Demon in the formation. This was the magic treasure that Crooked Soul had nearly fully refined, the “Immemorial Bowl”.

Although the Thousand Eyed Demon was trapped in the formation, it seemed to realize how powerful the yellow crescent

was. All of the eyes on its body locked onto the Immemorial Bowl flying towards it and shot scarlet beams at it simultaneously, combining into a thick red beam of light. For a short while, the beam rigidly blocked the yellow crescent's advance, forcing a contest of magic power with Crooked Soul, the magic treasure's controller.

Han Li then revealed a smile.

He patted a bulging storage pouch at his waist, causing over a hundred white lights to quickly fly out and surround the great formation.

These white lights were sinister puppet beasts that appeared to be almost three meters tall. They immediately opened their mouths and dazzling light began to condense in them as if they were prepared to act.

At this moment, Han Li's face was flushed with excitement. He waved his hand, causing his Redthread Shadowchaser needles to appear in his hand. At that same time, the puppet beasts each shot out a beam of light towards the Thousand Eyed Demon.

The demon beast seemed to have discovered the direness of its situation and suddenly let out a sharp whistle. Its entire body let out a groan and curled into a huge ball of flesh covered in spikes of light. At the same time, the red light released by its eyeballs started to turn green. These green streaks of light weren't launched as an attack, and instead condensed into a thick barrier of light around its body.

The hundred beams of light simultaneously struck the green light barrier, causing an explosion of radiance to shine around it. The demon beast's barrier managed to withstand the attack. However, the green light barrier began to flicker as if it would collapse before long.

With the absence of the red beam of light that previously restrained it, the Immemorial Bowl was free to attack. Under Crooked Soul's command, it suddenly became a huge disk that spanned about ten meters. In concert with the light beam attacks, it fiercely struck down onto the demon beast.

The sound of a sharp rupture soon followed. Although the light barrier was being sustained by desperate releases of green light by the Thousand Eyed Beast, the repeated attacks of the puppet's light beam along with the Immemorial Bowl's strike had completely destroyed its barrier.

Han Li, who had been waiting for this, instantly reacted, raising his hand. A set of red threads flew off and shot towards the demon beast's vulnerable body.

After the time it took to finish a meal, Han Li was inside the formation with a green orb the size of a chicken egg now in his hand along with a wide smile on his face.

Underneath his foot was the heavily damaged demon beast corpse with a fist-sized bloody hole on its body.

“Go!” Han Li didn’t delay any longer. After storing the demon beast’s corpse in his storage pouch, he set off and was immediately swept up by Crooked Soul’s yellow light and hastily taken to a different formation spell.

.....

That was how Han Li spent an entire month on Red Coral Island.

He would periodically place a drop of green liquid on the Rainbow Skirt Grass, gradually increasing the range of the demon lure. This attracted demon beasts in intervals of two or three days, allowing Han Li and Crooked Soul to slay over a dozen grade five demon beasts, much to Han Li’s great delight!

But when the Rainbow Skirt Grass had reached four hundred years old, it attracted a grade six demon beast by the name of “[Fowlcombed](#) Flood Dragon”. Han Li was very surprised and hastily cut off the scent of the Rainbow Skirt Grass with his formation spell. After the demon beast swam a few rounds nearby after the scent disappeared, it angrily left.

Frightened, Han Li discovered the Rainbow Skirt Grass was best used aged up to three hundred years. Maturing it past that point would attract even stronger demon beasts. When that time came, he hastily took out a new Rainbow Skirt Grass sprout and started over.

But as of current, nearly all the grade five demon beasts near Red Coral Island had perished. After having no demon beasts attracted

within a week, Han Li and Crooked Soul immediately put away their spell formations and left the island. After flying for several days in the Outer Star Seas, they found another coral island and continued hunting demon beasts with the same method.

This exciting, repetitive, and dangerous lifestyle in the Outer Star Seas continued for five years!

During this time he had killed hundreds of grade five demon beasts. He had also encountered unfamiliar demon beasts rarely seen in the cultivation world. The first time Han Li had come across them, he had found himself caught on the thin line between life and death.

Were it not for the vicious fearlessness of Crooked soul and his puppets, he would've already met his end in the vast ocean, even with the assistance of his formation spells.

Furthermore, time wasn't the only thing that was consumed during those years. Not only were a vast majority of his puppets destroyed, but many of his tools for setting up formations had been destroyed or badly damaged by the more violent demon beasts.

Even his most impressive Five Elements Reversal Formation had been destroyed half a year ago when he had carelessly attracted a grade seven demon beast. He could only helplessly trap the demon beast inside while he and Crooked Soul made their escape.

While his losses during these five years were great, it was only natural that his returns were even more astonishing.

Apart from receiving several hundred grade five demon cores, Han Li also acquired an incredible quantity of rare demon beast materials. He even had to discard a few of his less valuable items from his storage pouch to make room for all of them.

In addition to killing several hundreds of demon beasts, he had also tempered his combat skills to perfection and developed quite a few minor techniques for killing demon beasts by himself.

As of now, Han Li could calmly face a lone common grade five demon beast without a trace of fear.

Chapter 397: Bitter, Secluded Cultivation

Han Li was on his way back to Deep Jade Island, as careful as he had always been. He completely understood that without his puppets or formation spells, it was extremely dangerous to rush through the Outer Star Seas.

Although they were easily able to deal with a grade five demon beast, if they were to catch the attention of a grade six demon beast or worse, it would be difficult to avoid death.

According to his estimations, the demon cores he had gathered should be more than enough to get him through the second or even third revolution of the Three Essence Revolutions Technique. His several hundred grade five spirit stones would net him a couple hundred thousands of spirit stones at the very least. The rare materials he had gathered alone would double the price.

However, Han Li wasn't inspired by greed. This had all been done so that he may tread a bit farther in pursuit of the Immortal Dao. Thus, when it became increasingly dangerous to continue hunting demon beasts, he immediately decided to return.

As of now, he had traveled quite far into the Outer Star Seas. Had he not recorded all of the strange islands he had been to on his map, he might not have been able to find his way back.

Even if he knew the way back, Han Li's return would still take several months of flight. He greatly valued his life and feared that he might encounter ferocious demon beasts on his way back or

cultivators that may try to rob him.

Demon beasts shouldn't prove to be problem. At most, they would just circle around him a bit, but they wouldn't approach him too closely. But if he were to come across any malicious cultivators, they definitely wouldn't let them go. His demon cores would be difficult to protect, let alone his fragile life!

As such, Han Li and Crooked Soul were highly vigilant during their journey. Whenever they encountered traces of other cultivators, they immediately hid or fled.

In this way, Han Li eventually arrived back on Deep Jade Island without any problems, allowing him to let out a huge breath of relief.

Han Li entered an extremely shabby, small street and found that apart from two shopkeepers being replaced, everything else had remained the same.

Not paying attention to any of the shopkeepers' interested gazes, he walked towards the stone room with the transportation formation.

The Star Palace cultivator in the stone room had been replaced by a middle-aged man with a gentle face. Upon seeing Han Li and Crooked Soul enter the room, he faintly smiled, asking, "Do you two want to use the formation?"

.....

Han Li dove onto his large bed and soon fell into a deep sleep.

As of current, he had already returned to his cave residence on the thirty-ninth layer of Heavenly Star City. As both his body and mind were fatigued, he was unable to deal with any other matters. He'd first deeply sleep for a few days before waking up with the energy he needed.

His journey through the Outer Star Seas had tired him by no small amount!

After awakening, Han Li took a stroll around his cave residence. As he hadn't been there for many years, he felt that he should refamiliarize himself with it.

But when he went to the insect room he saw that the Gold Devouring Beetles had turned into a huge silver sphere once more, hanging from the ceiling in hibernation. Han Li couldn't help but lightly shake his head in response.

Soon after, Han Li took a trip to the city market and bought all of the pill recipes being sold in the market before returning. Han Li then busied himself once again with pill concoction.

Han Li then spent an entire two years within his cave residence refining large quantities of medicine pills in accordance to the pill recipes he had collected, combining aged spiritual herbs with

demon cores. His original problem of developing a tolerance for medicine was now a thing of the past.

During this time, he gradually sold off the demon beast materials he didn't need to the travelling merchants visiting Heavenly Star City. As a result, he wouldn't have to worry about spirit stones for a while.

After finishing these matters, Han Li thoroughly sealed off his cave residence and started to make preparations for dispersing his cultivation. But while he was arranging his medicine pills and the remaining demon beast materials, he unintentionally took out a particular item that gave him a bit of a headache — the large quantities of hundreds-year-old Rainbow Skirt Grass that he had used to lure demon beasts while in the Outer Star Seas.

They couldn't be sold for much, but it would be a pity to destroy them after having used quite a bit of the green liquid on them. Besides, Han Li had always held some interest in its great demon luring power when its leaves uncurled and had wanted to carefully research it.

As Han Li looked at the bunch of Rainbow Skirt Grass in front of him, he came up with a rather strange thought. The thoughts became stronger until he couldn't contain it, causing himself to feel a bit flabbergasted.

After tilting his head in thought, he gathered the Rainbow Skirt Grass and suddenly walked to the insect room containing the Gold Devouring Beetles. He then casually tossed the Rainbow Skirt Grass into the room, but the Gold Devouring Beetles didn't show

the slightest reaction.

Having seen this, Han Li laughed to himself. But after a moment of hesitation, he had Crooked Soul plant the Rainbow Skirt Grass on a few huge chunks of coral in the medicine garden.

Not long after, Han Li entered a hidden room and started to carefully scatter his cultivation in accordance with the Three Essence Revolutions Technique.

For the purpose of stability and safety, Han Li scattered his cultivation at a very slow pace. He had gradually scattered his cultivation for an entire half month before dropping down to his intended target, early Foundation Establishment stage.

After reaching this point, Han Li left seclusion. He would first consolidate his cultivation before practicing the Three Essence Revolutions Technique with the aid of medicine pills.

By some unknown compulsion, Han Li used a green drop to further mature a stalk of Rainbow Skirt Grass and threw it into the insect room when it started emitting its strange scent. Soon after, he stood outside the room, carefully staring inside through a slim gap, only to experience slight disappointment.

The silver sphere of clustered Gold Devouring Beetles didn't move in the slightest as if they hadn't detected any difference. Although this had slightly surprised Han LI, he wasn't particularly puzzled. This was because the Rainbow Skirt Grass didn't have an attractive effect on all demon beasts. As the Gold Devouring

Beetles were high ranking demon beasts, not being attracted was always a distinct possibility.

Han Li lightly sighed, no longer willing to waste any more time or green liquid on the grass. He thought to instead fully focus his resources and time on creating more Spirit Feed Pills for his two Bloodjade spiders.

But just as he thought this, the silver sphere of beetles suddenly broke apart.

The eyes of the several hundreds Gold Devouring Beetles flickered with red light as they flocked towards the strangely scented Rainbow Skirt Grass. After devouring it in an instant, they continuously let out a low hum as if they were irritated.

Han Li was somewhat stunned by this scene but immediately revealed slight joy. It seemed that his experiments could continue.

Han Li left the insect room in a great mood and ordered Crooked soul to periodically throw in a similar amount of Rainbow Skirt Grass. He wanted to see what effect his Rainbow Skirt Grass would have on demon beasts so that he may lay to rest some of the doubts he carried.

Not long after, Han Li brought all of his medicine pills with him into his hidden room and sealed it off, intent on staying until either he succeeded or died trying.

Han Li had already fully prepared himself, and in order to maintain his focus he had decided he wouldn't take a single step outside of his hidden room until he fully restored his cultivation. As for the rest of the matters in his cave residence, since he could will his clone, Crooked Soul, to take care of them, he had little worry.

Han Li took a pill out of a bottle and swallowed it before closing his eyes, entering a state of oblivious cultivation.

In the following days, apart from ordering Crooked Soul to tend to the matters outside of his room, he was completely focused on refining his Qi.

As time passed, Han Li's mind eventually felt no desire. Whenever he felt that his body's Spiritual Qi was lacking, he casually swallowed a medicine pill and entered meditation once more.

Years upon years of monotonous cultivation had passed, fueled by Han Li's intense desire to reach Core Formation.

Ten years passed in the blink of an eye and the hidden room's door still showed not a single sign of movement!

Twenty years passed by and still the room's door remained shut!

Thirty years...

Time continued to flow with countless suns and moons scurrying past the sky.

On a day during the sixtieth year, a black cloud suddenly appeared above Han Li's cave residence. The weather suddenly underwent a huge change, causing his silver beetles to wildly scatter inside their room.

At nearly the same time, threads of Spiritual Qi from the nearby hundred kilometers frantically amassed towards Han Li's cave residence, creating a huge vortex of Spiritual Qi that could be seen with the naked eye.

This scene alarmed the nearby cultivators. Regardless of whether they were passing by or a resident that lived nearby, they all stopped or left their cave residences, glancing at the scene with amazement.

“Core Formation! Someone has undergone Core Formation!” Many cultivators gazed at this scene and muttered to themselves, each with their own unique expression.

While there were those that were envious and confused, there were even more that revealed gazes of admiration.

At the same time, the cultivators at the island that were at Core Formation or higher noticed that the Spiritual Qi on Heavenly Star Island had undergone a strange change despite not having seen the phenomenon in the sky. They investigated by having their powerful spiritual senses leave their residences.

As they gazed towards Han Li's cave residence, there were a few among them that were expressionless or excited. Some of them had even frowned.

Chapter 398: Core Formation And Magic Treasures

The door to the secret room inside the cave residence had finally opened.

A silhouette slowly walked out of the room with their face covered by long, disheveled hair.

A yellow light then flashed to their side, revealing Crooked Soul with a stiff expression.

“Hehe, Core Formation! I’ve finally obtained Core Formation!” After looking at the exterior of the secret room and Crooked Soul, he heartily laughed towards the sky in awe-inspiring roars.

The gaps through the long, disheveled hair revealed the face of Han Li, who had undergone sixty years of secluded cultivation. However, his eyes revealed a refined spirit, and his every movement contained a vast pressure as if he had become a different person entirely.

After he finished laughing, Han Li looked at the scene outside of the hidden room with a sense of unfamiliarity. After ignoring the world for sixty years, he felt a great sense of change despite everything having remained the same. It was as if everything that had happened was but a distant matter.

Han Li didn’t stay still for long. Using his vague memories, he

went back to his bedroom.

After the time it took to finish a meal, Han Li left his bedroom with a beaming smile. He had restored his original attire and appearance, that of a youth about twenty years of age.

Now wearing a cold expression, he calmly walked towards the insect room.

The Gold Devouring Insects in the room had undergone a massive change over the years. Not only had their numbers reached a frightening several tens of thousands, but their originally silver shells began to reveal spots of gold, causing them to appear even more sinister and savage than before.

Han Li didn't reveal the slightest amazement. He had found out about this many years ago from his clone, Crooked Soul. The only change was that now he was able to see this with his own eyes.

Han Li hadn't expected that his original flash of insight to test the Rainbow Skirt Grass on his Gold Devouring Beetles would unexpectedly resolve the problem of their breeding.

While he was in seclusion, Crooked Soul continuously fed the Gold Devouring Beetles stalks of Rainbow Skirt Grass with their leaves uncurled. These beetles became increasingly violent after eating the herbs. After four years of consumption, the Gold Devouring Beetles had undergone a transformation.

One day after they finished eating the Rainbow Skirt Grass, the beetles began to fight and cannibalize each other. A few days later, the original several hundred had been reduced to a mere dozen. However, the surviving beetles were now docile and more beautiful.

Soon after, the cannibal beetles began to lay eggs. They all slowly died after having laid about a hundred eggs each, leaving Han Li with over a thousand insect eggs.

The eggs hatched about a year later, and Crooked Soul continued to feed them the ripened Rainbow Skirt Grass, causing them to cannibalize one another and lay their eggs once more.

After several repetitions, the number of Gold Devouring Beetles started to frantically increase.

Were it not for the fact that the amount of Rainbow Skirt Grass he could mature was limited, he would've had the beetles cannibalize themselves much more often and ceaselessly increase their numbers.

But what was most surprising was how the offspring of the cannibal beetles became both stronger and more violent with each increasing generation. In addition, their silver shells began to show gold spots at an increasing frequency.

This made Han Li wonder if their grade would increase after their shells turned completely golden.

Standing outside the insect room, Han Li stared at the Gold Devouring Beetles with a spirited gaze for half a day in silence. He clearly understood that this method of breeding the Gold Devouring Beetles was definitely not the orthodox method used by the beast controlling cultivators of ancient times.

This was because he was certain that his small mysterious bottle was unique in its effect of accelerated maturation. This method may perhaps be even better than the one used by his predecessors.

Han Li faintly smiled as he thought this. He then moved to the other insect room closeby that housed his two Bloodjade spiders.

Although Han Li had only instructed Crooked Soul to use a small portion of the green liquid produced to refine Spirit Feed Pills for the spiders, the amount of pills consumed over this long period of time had allowed the Bloodjade spiders to ascend by several grades. Now, they were peak grade four demon beasts.

They were currently exactly the same as the white spider he had fought in the underground cave. Their bodies were as translucent as jade, making for a beautiful sight.

The two spiders had clearly been made aware of Han Li's arrival through the connection they had with Han Li's mind. They immediately pounced towards the stone door, wishing to intimately play with Han Li.

Joyful, Han Li promptly opened the stone door, allowing the two Bloodjade spiders to pounce at him. Afterwards, they started to

climb circles all around Han Li's body.

Han Li caressed the backs of the two demon beasts for a moment while gazing in wonder at their sparkling, crystalline bodies. He then stored them in his spirit beast pouch before turning around and leaving their insect room.

As for the Gold Devouring Beetles, Han Li still had little intention of using them. He planned to first have them reproduce through a few more generations until their shells turned fully gold before putting them to use as his hidden ace.

Next, Han Li walked through his cave residence before returning to his bedroom in high spirits. After lying down on his bed, Han Li thought about his Core Formation in the hidden room.

Being able to so quickly achieve Core Formation greatly went against Han Li's expectations. He didn't cultivate to the third revolution of the Three Essence Revolutions Technique. Instead, he spent an entire thirty years to cultivate to the second revolution.

By relying on medicine pills to cultivate the Three Essence Revolutions Technique, his cultivation speed was far quicker than he had anticipated. He originally believed that completing the third revolution of cultivation was certain to be strenuous to the point of impossibility; it would consume far too many years of his lifespan to succeed. But by completing his second revolution in a mere thirty years, he had more than enough lifespan left to cultivate through the third revolution.

But after some thought, Han Li decided to not place all his hopes of Core Formation on the Three Essence Revolutions technique.

After all, this cultivation art was merely theorized and had never been tested! It was said that completing the third revolution would only allow a fifty percent chance of success in Core Formation. To put it into other words, even if he completed all three revolutions, he still had a fifty-percent chance of failing.

This caused him deep worry at heart, and he couldn't help but pick a more flamboyant method to increase his chances of Core Formation.

Before Han Li had killed him, he recalled the former young master of the Thousand Bamboo School, [Senior Martial Brother Li](#), had previously said that cultivating the Great Development Technique to a deep layer was able to increase his odds of Core Formation. Therefore, after some careful deliberation, he had decided to cultivate to the third layer of the Great Development Technique.

Last appeared in chapter 232. He had attempted to possess Han Li's body but was punished as a result.

Han Li's reasoning at the time had been: 'Regardless of whether or not he was lying, there is no harm in cultivating it!'

As expected, the third layer of the Great Development Technique took far more time to cultivate than the second layer. It took Han Li about twenty years before painstakingly making a breakthrough

and succeeding. As for the fourth layer of the Great Development Technique, Han Li had no thoughts to cultivate to it. At the time, he simply didn't have the time to spare for it.

Afterwards, Han Li took all sorts of supplementary spiritual medicines and began his next several year long attempt at Core Formation.

To tell the truth, Han Li didn't hold much confidence in Core Formation with his second revolution, given his crushing failure during his first attempt of Core Formation at his first revolution. He merely held the notion of only spending a few years just to give it a try. But while Crooked Soul's Core Formation only took four years, Han Li's unexpected success had occurred in five years due to his poor aptitude.

Although he had sensed the Heaven-Earth Spiritual Qi in his body run frantic, Han Li felt like it was a dream when a thumb-sized four-colored pearl formed after his body's true essence made desperate rotations in his Dantian.

'I'm going to enter Core Formation Stage like this?' He didn't dare to believe it! Han Li hadn't prepared himself in the least, nearly allowing this huge fortune, the still unstable golden core, to crumble. Frightened, he hurriedly concentrated on calming his heart so that he wouldn't cause a great disturbance and undergo the great misfortune of returning to Foundation Establishment.

Having recalled his brush with disaster, Han Li couldn't help but raise the corner of his mouth, forming a trace of a faint smile.

Han Li let out a deep breath before sitting up on his bed and then standing up.

Although it had been a while since his Core Formation, he was currently unable to calm the increasing excitement in his heart and couldn't stay still.

Now that he had entered Core Formation, not only was he considered a senior expert in the cultivation world, but his lifespan had been increased to a frightening six hundred years. This increase in longevity would allow him to later cultivate with peace of mind.

But most important, was that he was finally able to make use of his Core Flame. He could now polish and refine his own magic treasure.

With regards to magic treasures, Han Li had two in his possession. The Immemorial Bowl had already been refined by Crooked Soul. As for the Green Brilliance Dagger, he would use it to protect himself for the time being.

Ultimately, he would want to refine the long coveted magic treasure that was described by the [golden page](#), the “Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords”.

Han Li acquired the golden page from his former master, Li Huayuan, in chapter 240

These swords were refined as a set. After refining them, his strength would massively increase, and he would be capable of sweeping away any cultivators of a similar rank. In addition, now that he had reached the seventh layer of the Azure Essence Sword Art, he could make use of the divine ability, “Swordshadow Phantasm Technique”. This caused him to excitedly look forward to his upcoming journey through the cultivation world as a Core Formation cultivator.

He now wanted to hurriedly collect the materials for the magic treasure, Bamboo Cloudswarm Sword, so that he could create this magic treasure and begin strengthening it with his Core Flame and primal soul.

Chapter 399: Exquisite Sound Sect

As Han Li was silently contemplating inside his bedroom, his expression suddenly changed and he walked out.

During his many years of seclusion, the entrance of his residence had remained sealed. He saw that outside his cave residence's restrictions, there were eight sound transmission talismans of various colors, knocking against his barriers like headless houseflies.

Han Li looked at the scene with raised eyebrows for a moment before taking out his authority talisman and saying, "Receive!" The sound transmission talismans outside the barriers shot into his hand in response.

Han Li stood still as he calmly looked through them.

Half of the sound transmission talismans were from neighboring Core Formation cultivators wishing to offer their congratulations. The other half of the sound transmission talismans were invitations from organizations of varying sizes to take a position as a high ranking guest elder, using exceedingly rare treasures as payment. There was even one that offered two stunning maids as a recruitment gift right from the start.

After looking through the details of their offers, Han Li inwardly rolled his eyes.

He politely replied to the Core Formation cultivators offering

their congratulations and gave a direct refusal to the many organizations. He didn't believe that he could take it easy and be without worry now that he reached Core Formation. He still had to use a bit of time to consolidate his core. Furthermore, Han Li considered it advantageous to maintain a low profile.

In the coming days, Han Li started to frequently pay a visit to the cave residences of nearby Core Formation cultivators and humbly asked them for advice regarding what should be done after achieving Core Formation.

Because the topic at hand wasn't some sort of secretive issue, these cultivators were happy to chat with him and give him a few pointers. Han Li ended up profiting quite a bit from these visits.

However, a few cultivators felt very envious of how Han Li had managed to preserve his youthful appearance before achieving Core Formation. After all, apart from a miniscule group consisting of either geniuses with heavenly aptitude or those like Han Li who cultivate with the assistance of many spiritual medicines, most Core Formation cultivators had reached quite a considerable age by the time of their Core Formation.

Although their lifespans had greatly increased after reaching Core Formation, they didn't regain their youthful appearance. At most, they would appear less sickly or haggard as they grew older. Naturally, there were a few cultivators that practiced a cultivation art that had the wondrous effect of preserving one's appearance and were also part of the group which preserved their youthful appearance after Core formation.

Han Li happened to still have a few Face Setting Pills on hand. As he wasn't particularly attached to them, he traded them with the Core Formation cultivators for a few rare items, much to everyone's satisfaction.

Although Han Li didn't end up becoming close friends with any of them, they became familiar enough that he had an amiable relationship with them, capable of calling one another 'Brother' and 'Fellow Daoist'.

During this time, Han Li had also refined the Green Brilliance Dagger while searching for magic treasure and grade three puppet materials.

There were many materials capable of refining magic treasures along with refinement techniques of almost every description. Apart from the power and efficacy, using top quality materials to refine a magic treasure would result in far superior power and an even greater upgrade potential than those refined using common materials. Additionally, even if the same materials were used, there will be great differences in both power and efficacy depending on the secret techniques used to refine them.

Thus, apart from the common magic treasure refinement techniques known to everyone, the exceptional secret refinement techniques were kept hidden by sects and other great powers, not easily divulged to outsiders.

However, this didn't mean that the best materials combined with the best treasure refinement technique would result in a magic treasure with inexhaustible potential might. What was most

important to a magic treasure's strength was the constant refinement and nourishment from the cultivator's primal soul.

If the master of a peerless magic treasure was unwilling to spend the time to nurture it, its power may be inferior to that of a common magic treasure. In fact, it wasn't exactly a rare occurrence.

As for the Bamboo Cloudswarm Swords, its main material was thousand year spirit bamboo as the name implied.

This material was easy for Han Li to acquire by spending a bit of time and taking advantage of the abilities of his small bottle. However, using common types of bamboo was beneath him. He wanted to acquire the rumored divine bamboo as the primary material for his magic treasure refinement. As a result, Han Li had attentively kept watch on the city market of Heavenly Star City until now. However, he wasn't able to find anything that satisfied him.

Although he felt somewhat anxious, Han Li felt that it would be better to have nothing if he couldn't have the best and could only leave the matter of refining his magic treasure for later. Fortunately, as he had the Green Brilliance Dagger as well as a few treasure talismans, he wouldn't have to worry for a while.

Since he couldn't refine his magic treasure, Han Li turned his eyes towards refining new puppets.

According to the Puppet Sutra, the strength of grade three

puppets were equivalent to mid Foundation Establishment cultivators. As such, the materials required to refine them were even more precious than those for grade two puppets. In addition, these puppets came in several different shapes.

After some deliberation, Han Li chose the puppet that primarily used wood element materials, the ape styled puppet.

Although this puppet required much older ironwood along with the rare Sky Crystal Wood, they were wood type materials. Han Li could use his green liquid on them and massively decrease their cost.

But even with this, the higher grade supplementary materials combined with the increased number of puppets he could control was sure to add up to an increasingly frightening cost. Although this amount of spirit stones wouldn't bankrupt him, it would consume all of the materials he had accumulated.

Helpless, Han Li could only sell off another portion of the rare materials he acquired from the grade five demon beasts and postpone poverty for the time being. However, Han Li didn't expect that his actions caught the eye of an observant individual despite being so careful.

One day, just as he finished selling off some materials to a minor travelling merchant, a young woman as charming as a flower blocked his way back to his cave residence.

“Are you Senior Han? My clan's madam wishes to invite Han Li

to the nearby Clear River Teahouse. Would Senior give me the honor of accepting? If you refuse, this junior will be heavily punished by my mistress.”

“I’m not interested!” After a mere glance at the young woman, Han Li refused without the slightest hesitation.

He was able to make out that although this woman was a mere Qi Condensation cultivator, she cultivated some kind of charming technique. If he were inexperienced or careless, he definitely would’ve made an embarrassment of himself.

The seventeen year old woman was alarmed at Han Li’s refusal and hastily implored him, “Senior Han! If you don’t go, this junior will be punished for failure.”

When the young woman said that, Han Li turned around and left with an indifferent expression. Although he didn’t know whose authority she was acting under, he had no interest in meeting a stranger.

“Senior Han, please wait! The Exquisite Sound Sect’s Junior Fan Jingmei pays her respect to Senior Han. I hope Senior will forgive Lian’er for her offenses. I will properly discipline her later.” After Han Li took two steps away from the young woman, he heard a pleasant female voice.

He couldn’t help but stop and turn his head for a look.

At some unknown time, a woman covering her face with a muslin shawl had appeared beside the young woman. Although her face was concealed, Han Li was able to make out that her skin was as white as snow and her hair was black and shiny, coiled high around her head. Her two eyes, clear as water, stared at Han Li without blinking.

“I do not recognize you, miss. If you have any business, please make it short. I wish to return to my residence and cultivate!” Han Li calmly spoke with a misanthropic tone.

Fan Jingmei was startled for a moment before replying with a faint smile, “Since Senior Han is so straightforward, I will be direct as well. Senior has recently sold off large quantities of rare demon beast materials. Our sect is greatly interested in these materials and wishes to have a chat with Senior. However, there are far too many people here. How about we take this discussion to a quiet room in a teahouse?”

After hearing her explanation, Han Li carefully examined the woman with narrowed eyes for a moment. After seeing her reveal bashfulness, Han Li stiffly said, “Fine, lead the way!”

“Many thanks for Senior’s kindness. Senior Han, please follow me!” The woman revealed slight happiness and hastily walked forward with light steps. As for the young woman, she dejectedly followed after her.

However, although the young woman walked in front, she couldn’t help but turn her head and steal a look at Han Li. But when her gaze met Han Li’s, she quickly turned her head around in

fright and her ears revealed a strong shade of red.

When Han Li saw this, he revealed a mysterious smile and inwardly chuckled.

The teahouse wasn't far away. After a short moment, Han Li entered a pavilion with a huge flag saying, "Tea".

There were quite a few people drinking tea at this time. When a middle-aged man drinking tea saw the two women walk in, he hastily ran towards them and said, "Martial Aunt, the room is ready! You and your guest may enter!"

"Good, bring us there and stand guard by the door afterwards." Fan Jingmei indifferently commanded.

"Understood."

The middle-aged man then led Han Li and the other two to an elegant room on the second floor.

There was a grey-clothed old man in the room that was calmly brewing a pot of piping hot tea. His eyes didn't show the slightest change as he watched Han Li and the others enter the room.

Chapter 400: Dignified

“Elder Zhao, sorry for the long wait! This is Senior Han, the owner of those demon beast materials!” After entering the room, Fan Jingmei spoke to the grey-clothed old man with a respectful tone.

The grey-clothed old man replied, “Oh, so it’s Fellow Daoist Han! Please, sit. This old man just steeped a pot of ice-cloud spirit tea. Please, have a taste.”

Han Li frowned. There was nothing odd about the old man’s appearance apart from unusually red cheeks, as if he had just recovered from a grave illness. He couldn’t help but feel somewhat puzzled.

His current spiritual sense was far stronger than cultivators of the same rank. In an instant, he was able to see that the old man was an early Core Formation cultivator. Han Li didn’t say anything in refusal and bluntly took a seat across from the old man. Han Li indifferently stared at the old man as he poured a cup of fragrant tea, but didn’t move to take it.

Han Li didn’t mean to slight the old man as he was acting out of habitual carefulness. He definitely wasn’t going to drink something from an unfamiliar place.

The old man didn’t reveal any displeasure at Han Li’s cautious actions. Instead, he faintly smiled and poured himself a cup, placing all other matters to the back of his head for that instant.

“Senior Han! We’ve come to find you on behalf of the Exquisite Sound Sect to purchase all of your remaining demon beast materials. Let’s discuss the price.” Just as Fan Jingmei sat down, she gently spoke to Han Li with a dainty composure.

How could Han Li easily admit to still having many rare materials despite not knowing their intentions? After some calm thought about what they had said, Han Li decided to block them for the time being, “It is true that I had previously acquired quite a few demon beast materials. However, I have just sold my last batch. I fear I that must disappoint you.”

When Lady Fan heard Han Li’s refusal, she sweetly smiled and softly spoke with a hint of laughter, “It seems Senior Han wishes to fool us. Although our sect doesn’t know how many demon beast materials you have, we are certain that it’s a large amount. Otherwise, Senior Han wouldn’t have so carefully sought out small, travelling merchants to sell them to. In addition, every transaction was done in very small amounts, and you look for a different buyer every time.”

“Had our sect not happened to be gathering related materials, it’s likely we wouldn’t have discovered something was amiss. Senior sure is scared of having his wealth exposed! If this is the case, Senior Han can dispel those fears. Although our sect isn’t some sort of superpower, our sect holds quite a positive reputation in the Scattered Star Seas. If Senior were to sell all the materials to us, it would save us the trouble of repeatedly purchasing them from small merchants!”

The woman spoke with a beaming smile and a calm appearance. However, Han Li's eyes coldly glinted, and he slightly scowled. Finding out you had been secretly investigated wasn't a happy matter!

In response to Han Li's scowl, Lady Fan suddenly changed the subject and gave Han Li an explanation, "Senior Han, please don't blame me for my rude conduct from before. This matter is quite urgent and we had to make use of a majority of our power in Heavenly Star City to track you down. We hope that Senior will provide us assistance, just this once!"

This time, she had placed herself in a weaker position with her words and gaze revealing a slight intention to implore.

Han Li's scowl gradually subsided, but he didn't give an immediate response. Instead, he started to lightly tap the table with an indifferent expression. At this moment, Han Li's mind was continuously churning through lines of thought, analyzing the pros and cons at lightning speed.

Although he didn't know why the Exquisite Sound Sect required such a large quantity of demon beast materials, they clearly believed that he possessed what they desired. If Han Li further denied them, it would only serve to create a meaningless grudge.

While he hadn't heard of the Exquisite Sound Sect before, they shouldn't be too weak, given the appearance of Elder Zhao. Han Li didn't wish to make an enemy of them without good reason.

In addition, he possessed a bit too many demon beast materials. If he continued to sell them off bit by bit, it would only be a matter of time before he was found out. As such, wouldn't it be better to take advantage of this opportunity and cleanly handle the matter all at once? After all, this was Heavenly Star City where fights were prohibited. He wouldn't have to worry about anything going amiss.

With that thought, Han Li was silent for a moment more before serenely saying, "Since you've spoken as such, I won't further conceal the truth. I do possess a few of the demon beast materials that your sect desires, but I don't know whether or not I have enough to satisfy you!"

The two women revealed joy at Han Li's admittance. As for the old man sipping tea as if he were above the world, he gazed at Han Li with a much more relaxed expression.

"How much are you in possession of?!" Lady Fan impatiently asked, gazing at Han Li in anticipation.

Han Li faintly smiled and replied with an astonishing number, much to the pleasant surprise of the woman. Although she knew Han Li possessed quite a bit, she didn't expect the quantity to be at such a degree. She could finally finish her mission.

"I want all of those materials! Does Senior have time to do the trade today?" The Exquisite Sound Sect's Lady Fan couldn't keep her composure and spoke with a slight tremble in her voice, fearful that Han Li would change his mind.

Han Li felt quite surprised at this woman's impatience. However, he also felt that it would be best for this trade to be made as quickly as possible. There would be less time for any unwelcome problems to appear. After some thought, he said, "I do. Let's do the trade here! Lady Fan should go get the spirit stones. I'll go and fetch the demon beast materials." Han Li's clear decisiveness was in agreement with the woman's intentions. She repeatedly nodded her head with a gaze of happiness.

Han Li then indifferently stood up and took his leave, walking out of the room in large strides.

A moment after Han Li disappeared from view, Lady Fan's excited appearance gradually faded away. She suddenly turned her head towards the old man and asked, "Senior Zhao, how is his cultivation? I've heard that he had just achieved Core Formation. He shouldn't have had the time to refine a magic treasure. If you were to take him by surprise, could you overcome him? If you are confident, we would be able to save quite a huge sum of spirit stones."

By the time this woman icily said those words, her dainty temperament had changed into a chilling, sinister expression.

"Impossible! Although this person hasn't been in Core Formation for long, his cultivation art is unordinary. Not only is his magic power exceedingly pure, but his body conceals the faint Qi of a magic treasure. While he didn't have the time to secretly refine a magic treasure, he is in possession of an inherited magic treasure. We cannot look down on him." Elder Zhao shook his head and

opposed the suggestion.

The woman's eyes glinted with a strange expression as she slowly said, "So it seems this person isn't weak. How about we pull him into our operation in the coming month? If things goes smoothly, we can spend a bit to rope him in. If things goes unfavorably, we can just abandon him!"

"That really is a good method! But from the recent conversation, he appears to know when it is appropriate to retreat despite appearing so youthful. It doesn't seem he will be easily taken advantage of. What is your grasp of the situation? Are you thinking about seducing him?" As the old man spoke, he revealed displeasure.

Lady Fan shot a glance at the old man. Then, while stifling laughter, her eyes revealed fawning. "Hehe, Senior, you're jealous! Relax, I won't touch any man apart from you." She pulled away at her muslin shawl to reveal her extremely enchanting face.

The old man originally appeared somewhat sickly. But upon seeing the woman, he was at a loss for words, and his cheeks flushed to an even deeper red. This scene left Lady Fan feeling very satisfied.

"Senior, in order to protect me, you suffered a great injury. It is something that I will always remember!" After saying this, Lady Fan spun her lithe, well-endowed body around and slid into the old man's embrace, caressing the old man's chest with her slender, white hands.

At this moment, Lady Fan's face revealed overflowing thoughts of love, and her eyes appeared moist to the point of overflowing with tears. Her alluring beauty was capable of even resurrecting dead men.

The old man let out a breath as the woman's white hand climbed up his chest out of impatient desire. He then crudely responded by embracing her fragrant body with equivalently impure intentions.

This scene caused the young woman who still remained in the room to deeply blush. She averted her gaze with a lowered head.

"Lian'er! How about you wait outside and report back once he returns?" Lady Fan softly whispered as if she had moaned.

"Yes, of course." The young woman hastily responded as if she were being spared and stepped out of the room.

But before she even left the room, they still continued.

"That young girl has become far more beautiful these past two years. How about you give me a few years to teach her a couple things? Since good things shouldn't be given to outsiders..."

"Bah! You're dreaming! I only kept her around because she was useful! I forbid you from laying your hands on her! Could it be that I..."

Having clearly heard the two's flirtatious banter, the young woman sighed and left the room.